

“PRESENT YOURSELVES TO GOD”
(Dead to Sin, Alive to God Part 2)

Romans 6:8–14

Key Verse: 6:13

“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.”

“What are you doing with your life?” This is a challenging question. Some might say, “Not much,” to avoid getting honest. Others happily share all they’re doing. But do we always have to be saying or doing something? We’re in the section of Romans focused on sanctification. In justification, Paul called us to trust in what Jesus did in taking the punishment for our sins and shedding his blood for us. In sanctification, there are now things we need to believe and active steps we need to take. In 6:1–7 Paul taught us to think about ourselves in light of what we believe: in Christ, we died to sin, and in Christ, God allows us to walk in newness of life. Now in verses 8–14 he takes it further: our new thinking based on faith needs to lead to action. What action? Paul says to “present ourselves to God.” What does he mean? Why is this necessary, and how can we really do it? May God speak to us through his word.

Let’s read verse 8. This is a promise of God. To die with Christ means not to literally die, but to accept his death for my sin and to die with him to my sin. It also means to suffer with Christ and for Christ. If we die to our sin with Jesus and begin to suffer with Jesus, God promises that we will also live with him. This promise looks forward to our future resurrection. But it’s also a promise for right now. As we’ve already heard, to “live with him” means to walk in newness of life. To “live with him” means to be set free from sin, to no longer be enslaved to sin. To “live with him” means to draw on his resurrection life each day to overcome the power of sin and death in me and live a spiritual life.

Paul goes on. Look at verses 9–10. Paul is urging us to consider Christ: what his death and his life really mean to us. First, he died to sin, once for all. Second, he was raised from the dead, never to die again. Third, the life he now lives, he lives to God. Again, the emphasis is on his resurrection, which broke the power of sin and death. And the point is, because Christ now lives “to God,” as we live with him, we can, too.

Read verse 11. Paul calls us to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. What does alive to God mean? It means maintaining this new “gospelized”

way of thinking. The devil is always trying to deceive us into believing we are hopeless slaves to sin, to prevent us from living a spiritual life. But as we hold onto the truth of Christ by faith, God restores our minds and exposes those lies. In Christ Jesus, we truly are dead to sin and alive to God. Being “alive to God” also means coming out from the dominion of death, just as our Lord Jesus did (verse 9). It means being free from fear, despair, and meaninglessness caused by death. It means viewing life and the world through the lens of living hope in Jesus. And being “alive to God” means having a clear break with my sin, because Christ died for my sins, once for all (verse 10). Let’s not be alive to sin and dead to God; let’s be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Notice how Paul repeats this expression “to God” four times here (10,11,13–2X). Ultimately, Paul is telling us that “alive to God” is a shift from a self-centered life to a God-centered life. Last week we thought about sin being fundamentally a godless way of thinking. So it makes sense that when Jesus saves us from our sin, he helps us “live to God” with a new, God-centered way of thinking. “Alive to God” means coming to know God personally. As we take time to meditate on who he is, we delight in him, and we become eager to glorify him with our lives. Knowing the living God isn’t burdensome or heavy; it gives us the greatest delight. We gain a new desire to honor him as God and thank him for all he’s done and all he’s still doing. We put him first in our thoughts as we wake up, and he’s still first in our thoughts as we fall asleep. We seek to please him throughout the day instead of seeking to please ourselves. How do we come “alive to God” like this? It’s through the resurrection power of Jesus working in us.

How do we practically live “alive to God”? Read verse 12. With our new way of thinking—as dead to sin and alive to God—we have a new way to respond to the sin within us. Paul is especially talking about our inner battle. Though we believe in Jesus, sin is still always trying to reign in our mortal body. It’s always trying to get us to obey its passions. We can’t just give in and expect God to do a miracle to save us from it. Paul tells us something very specific to do here: *don’t* let sin reign in our body; *don’t* obey its passions. But how can we do that? Aren’t we too powerless? Isn’t sin too strong for us? Yes, both are true. But we can start when we believe that Jesus made us dead to sin and alive to God through his own death and resurrection. With this faith, we’ve got spiritual ammunition outside of ourselves to fight with. Through the Holy Spirit we need to cry out to God to help us put to death the misdeeds of our body (8:13–15). Basically, we need to take action against the sin within us, based on our faith in Jesus. It’s like a spiritual defensive operation. As they say in football, “defense wins championships.” Others say, “the best defense is a good offense.” Actually, good teams need both. In the spiritual battle, what’s our offense?

Read verse 13. The word “present” is here twice. It’s repeated in verse 16, and twice more in verse 19. It’s a crucial word in this chapter on sanctification. It has a strong military tone. Soldiers present themselves for duty to their officers. They come in front of them and shout, “Present, ARMS!” And they thrust out their rifles straight up and down. It’s a sign of honor to their officers. It also shows a clear readiness: to move and to fire whenever the commander says so, not in their own way, but in obedience. Who’s our commander? Our Lord Jesus Christ. Practically, are we ready to obey him in any way, at any time? This is newness of life, ready to honor, trust, yield to and obey Christ above all else, at any cost.

Why would anyone do that, though? Paul uses an important phrase here: “...as those who have been brought from death to life.” We all were in the realm of death on account of our sin. It was a realm of condemnation and the wrath of God. We had no way to get out of that horrible realm. But God sent his Son to turn his wrath away from us, to shed his blood for us, to redeem us, and to raise him from the dead, to bring us out of that dark realm and into the world of abounding grace and new life. Remember, we’re never forced into yielding our lives 100% to Jesus. But it’s the only normal response we could have, because he brought us from death to life! And it’s not just an emotional gratitude.

The other important words here are “members” and “instruments.” Our “members” are our physical and mental faculties—mind and heart, hands and feet, eyes and mouth. Sin tries to dominate our faculties to enslave us (7:22–23; 8:5–8), but in Christ, God claims every single part of us. And when Paul says “instruments,” the word literally means “weapons.” Paul writes elsewhere that our warfare isn’t physical; it begins in our minds with a powerful weapon: the truth of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3–5). But in Romans 6, the weapons are the members of our body. Did you know you’re actually a weapon of some kind? Our mind, heart, eyes, mouth and hands are either enslaved to sin or yielded as weapons for righteousness. In his grace, God can use even us as weapons of his peace, love, and hope, to pull people out of the realm of death and into the realm of life.

As we’ve already seen, we can live in Adam, and like Adam, bring more of a sinful influence into the world. Or we can live in Christ, and like Christ, through our obedience, bring more of a godly influence into this world. But in every time and place, in every Christian’s life, it’s not easy: there’s a battle involved. Are we ready to fight? Are we going to be instruments for unrighteousness, used by the devil? Or are we going to be instruments for righteousness, used by God? It all depends—on whether we’re ready in our personal lives to fight to live by the obedience of faith.

Yet even before fighting, Paul says here, “Present yourselves to God.” This is the real foundation of all fighting. It’s where all the strength for fighting comes.

In Greek this word literally means to come close into someone's presence. We tend to jump into things we should be doing, skills or techniques we should be learning. But this phrase is telling us, "Come into God's presence, through faith in Christ." And what's surprising here is that it's a call for a change. Paul is calling us not when we're doing great, but when we're currently presenting ourselves as instruments for unrighteousness. With the verb tense he uses here, he's saying: "Knock that off. Turn around and go the other way. Come to God and surrender to him." It's a call to repent. It's amazing that God is willing to take us back, even though we've been living on the wrong side. God is willing to accept us into his presence again. He's ready to put us to good use, if we would just return to him through faith in Jesus. He is "the God of all grace" who promises to "restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish" us in Christ (1 Pet. 5:10b). Praise God who's willing to take us back, again and again! Praise God who bears with us so patiently. Praise God who humbly wants to work even with us, to fight for his kingdom and bring his saving grace to others lost in darkness.

So how can we present ourselves to God first? It's all about knowing his grace. If we're sure of his grace, we'll draw near to him. In fact, if we've received his grace, we really *want* to draw near to him. We *want* to present ourselves to him, for his service. We *want* to love and serve him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, without holding anything back. We don't present ourselves to God in a hurry, just to get something out of him, to force him to give us what we want. We come to surrender fully to him, to do his will.

This kind of presenting ourselves to God is never a matter of our effort or legalistic duty. It's our grace-filled response to God. God initiates, sustains, and empowers our walk. We just need to receive his grace by prioritizing time with him daily. It's very practical. Many think, "I'm too busy for lots of prayer." But someone famously said, "I'm too busy not to pray!" Our mind so quickly gets engrossed in needs, problems and demands. But when we draw near in prayer and meditate on his word, we step out of human striving and into his holy presence. We quietly appreciate his grace, which renews our souls, grants us peace for the day, and newly inspires us to live for him. Honestly, how's your devotional life? When our daily time with God is anchored in his grace, we truly come alive. It's his grace that sustains us to keep up the fight. As we draw on his grace daily, we make progress in our sanctification.

Then what happens? Paul says we become instruments for righteousness. We become part of God's bigger work in the world, to turn people away from the power of sin and death, to the real solution in Jesus. In this dark world we encounter so many people living as instruments for unrighteousness. It can seem overwhelming, and hopeless. But by faith in the grace of Jesus, God can use

instruments like us, yielded to him, to bring people today, even in this very lost generation, to the obedience of faith, and to reach all the nations.

In verse 14 Paul gives us the ultimate reassurance for this struggle. Let's read it. This promise, "sin will have no dominion over you," guarantees that sin's rule in us is broken once and for all. Our confidence and victory don't depend on our performance or striving under the law, which only exposes our weakness and inability. Instead, our change is grounded in the grace of God reigning in us and over us. Because we are under grace, sin's mastery over us is shattered, giving us freedom and assurance as we present ourselves to God.

So, what are you doing with your life? Going with the flow? Giving in to the moment? Escaping? Or are you fighting for sanctification in your life, and for truly spreading the good news of Jesus? It's a battle not for spiritual "superheros"; it's for everyday, ordinary people in Christ. Nobody else can fight it for us; it's something we have to actively engage in ourselves. This battle doesn't depend on our effort or abilities. It's fundamentally a response to the grace of our Lord Jesus, to the great love of God for us in him. May God help us respond to his grace by presenting all of ourselves to him, each day, to be used as weapons for righteousness.