

# Present Yourself

Romans 6.12-23

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If you go for a job interview, you make sure you present yourself well. You make sure you look good, you speak well and you come across as thoughtful, wise, intelligent. You do all to make sure that you look like just the right person for the job.

We use the term ‘to present yourself’ to a large extent as something cosmetic. It is about image.

When Paul, in his letter to the Romans, tells the Christians that they must present themselves, he is not talking at all about image. He talks about the reality of our life.



We have a choice to make. Do we present ourselves to sin, or do we present ourselves to God. Do we make ourselves available to sin, or to God.

## 1. The Facts: From death to life

God saved us from drowning in the ocean of sin, and guilt, misery, problems, by pulling us into the ark of Jesus Christ.

That is actually what our baptism did. Our baptism, which we accepted from God with faith and thankfulness, took us out of the world of darkness, and placed us into the world of God.

These are the plain facts; you live in the world of God; you participate in his kingdom, because God pulled you out of the water and he gave you new life.

Because God blessed us so amazingly we desire to live for him.

But this does not happen easily. It is a tough job, to obey God. That is why Paul, in his letter that read from today, begins with an encouragement to the Christians in Rome:

“Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.”

Sin is not a very popular topic nowadays. When we talk about the love of God, or Jesus being the Good Shepherd, preachers are on the safe side.

But talk about sin, and we must be careful.

The former American president Jimmy Carter, now 95 years old, has always been an active member of his Baptist church. I came across a good quote from him about sin. He says,

We have a tendency to condemn people who are different from us, to define their sins as paramount and our own sinfulness as being insignificant.



True. The 'other' is always worse than we are, is he not?

So let us agree, today's sermon is not about people outside the church, and not about someone else sitting here in church. It is about me, not about someone else.

How can I live for God? What does he want from me?

St Paul wrote his letter to Christians in Rome, good people, saints he calls them.

But even God's people, even people who have received eternal life - still have to be told - live for God, not for yourself.

In verse 18 and 22, Paul uses these same words. "You have been set free from sin." Now that is a good starting point when we talk about this topic.

These are the facts in our Christian life. We are not slaves of sin. We are able to live for God. He owns us. We are servants of God and of righteousness.

It is great to let this fact sink deep into our mind and heart. You are a servant of God. These are the facts. You are not a servant of sin, of yourself, of evil. You are a servant of God.

The word servant is *doulos* in Greek, which really means slave. God is your owner. The apostle Paul presents God as our slave master.

That should not worry us, because to be owned by God is a great thing. He takes good care of you, and he is powerful to do this well.

And as God is the only one who has the right to own you and me, and anyone else, the only moral option for us is to reject and resist and condemn any form of human slavery.

No human being has the right to claim ownership over someone else. Only God, our creator and sustainer, had this right.

God is your owner. But as He is our owner, He can tell us, his servants, what to do.

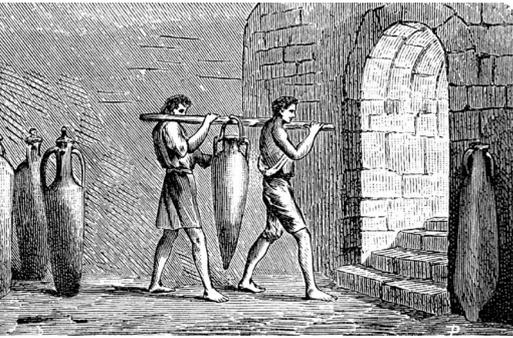
## **2. Our action: Present yourself as a servant to God**

The reason why Paul presents God here as our owner, is because he wants us to live for God.

“Present yourself as an instrument for God and for righteousness, and do not use yourself as an instrument for sin”, Paul tells those Roman Christians.

We have a choice to make, every day, and many times during the day.

Do we use our life, our possessions, our time, for the sake of God and his righteousness, or do think of our own needs first? We just live for our own pleasures? For our own honor? For our own comfort?



Paul says, “Present your members, [that is, your whole body, your whole being, present yourself] as a servant to God.”

What does this mean? Present yourself? Think of the slaves in the house of their master. Early in the morning they present themselves to the master of the house. “Here we are sir, to do your will and nothing else. You own us, we do as you say.”

So how can we present ourselves to God, to obey him?

Let’s be very practical. Like those servants in the past, it is good to present us to God at the beginning of each day. “Here I am Lord, to do your will.”

Many Christians have made it their habit to begin the day with prayers, to present themselves to God.

We ask ourselves, before God, ‘what can I do today that is in line with the will of God and with righteousness.’

You can pray for the people you know you will meet, and pray for the unexpected events of the day, pray for your work, for your friends, for your family.

Pray for our city council, for the police, for hospitals, for the firebrigade to keep our place safe.

Pray for the government, and for the things that may be close to your heart. That we will treat people equally; that we build up our world and its nature, instead of tear it down.

Praying for people helps you move away from your own personal inclinations and attitudes toward those people. And it helps you to adopt the viewpoints and attitudes of God toward those people. And that is always better, is it not?

Another way to present yourself to God, is also to listen carefully to what he has to tell you. From your bible you learn to know what God wants from you.

The theologian Origen, from the early church, had this advise in his bible commentary on Romans 6:

The power of the cross is such that if it is placed before our eyes and kept faithfully in mind [...] and the mind may keep its gaze fixed on the death of Christ, no lust, no desire, no passion and no envy will be able to overcome it.

Think of what Christ did for making your life right with God. Should we then not present ourselves to Him, who paid with his life to bring us back to God?

Presenting ourselves to God is also related to understanding our faith well. Paul writes in Rom 6:17 that we were once slaves of sin but we have now “become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.”

The church has always had a ‘standard of teaching’ that all members were committed to. A sort of summary of the faith and of the life people were expected to live.

It is not enough to read from the bible a bit here and a bit there - it is also important to have a good grasp of the full will of God. To know who God is and what he wants from us.

It is healthy to every now and then evaluate yourself. Do you really serve Him? Do you struggle to do His will and his will alone? Or do you mess up?

Ofcourse we all mess up.

That is why we do not need some slick presentation skills to present ourselves to God. He knows who you are.

The only rule for presenting yourself is: No hypocrisy. No effort to look better than you are. And forget about many beautiful words.

We come to him naked, as we are. Humbly.

We often pray, “Lord, forgive us our trespasses.”

“Lord, help us to present ourselves as an instrument for righteousness. Lord, help me to present myself each day for serving you.”

Because we find it so hard.



Many Christians get shocked when they see the failures of sins in their own life, or in the life of other Christians. But why be so surprised? As if we will ever be perfect before we enter into God’s palaces in eternity.

### **3. The result - our sanctification**

We are all in a process - a process that may at times seem to go very slow. A process of sanctification, of becoming more and more holy. That process started when we first presented ourselves to God.

But for the process to continue, there is this need to presenting ourselves to God each day, if we want to love people and to serve our Lord.

We go into the world to love and serve the Lord. And God is present in your life through his Spirit, to help us.

“Present your members as slaves to righteousness, leading to sanctification.”

I like to underline, that this idea of sanctification, of becoming more holy, does not make you just sweet and soft, and it is also not the same as just praying a lot and reading bible all the time.

Becoming more holy means to live more in accordance with the will of God - and surely, that includes prayer, and knowing the Word of God, and it includes helping old people to cross the street, and it includes being nice to your neighbours.

But holiness also entails speaking against injustice. It also includes taking care of God's world, of nature, of animals. It may mean that you have to stand up for the rights of people to have a decent salary and to be treated well.

It includes standing up for people in your own environment who are spoken badly of. It means speaking up when governments care more about the stock exchange than about people.

It means making clear that you tolerate no injustice, no racism, no degrading other people.

God is interested in all of life. He is interested in all of your life. And he calls you to present yourself, to stand before him and say - “here I am Lord, send me into your world, to do your will.”

## Conclusion

A final word about this concept of presenting yourself to God. This language of presenting yourself is actually also language from the Old Testament, where people had to present their sacrifices before God.

We do not come to God with sacrifices, an animal, some money, some things. We come to him with ourselves. We are the sacrifice for God.

If we present ourselves as a sacrifice to sin, then the result is death. It will burn you up.

But God freely gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, and that is why we present ourselves with joy to Him.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul says,

I appeal to you [...] brothers, [sisters] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

**Amen.**

