

# Appropriating the Power of God in the Church for the Work

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*The Doctrine of the Church*

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the sixth chapter of Romans, Romans 6. We are continuing our series on "The Doctrine of the Church" that we've been, this is now our 11<sup>th</sup> message on ecclesiology, that is, what the Bible has to say about the church, the people of God, the body of Christ. And we've seen that one of the favorite images of the New Testament to describe the church is the temple. The church, the people of God, are the spiritual temple of the Lord, that it's not the building that we gather in, we are the building and we are a building that is devoted to worship. That's the whole purpose of the temple for man to meet with God. And so God intends as his kingdom expands and extends, to produce churches, people who have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, repented of their sins, placed their faith in him, been born again and are growing into local temples for God to dwell in. And so we've seen that's the metaphor that's kind of guided the structure of this series because we spent three weeks talking about, this is our 11<sup>th</sup>, three weeks talking about the foundation of the church, the foundation of the temple, and we saw that's the word of God, the inerrancy of Scripture, the total truthfulness of God's word and the right dependence upon the word in our preaching and teaching. So three weeks on foundation, then we talked about, two weeks we talked about the ultimate priority being worship, that what we're doing, the building we're building is for worship. What we're trying to do is cultivate hearts that when we gather together are more and more pure in their devotion to God, that our worship would become even more acceptable to him by his grace. So we spent two weeks on that, then we spent three weeks on the framework of the church. So you see the foundation, the word of God, the framework we said was biblical leadership, and then the last two Sundays we talked about the actual work, ongoing construction work of the temple, that you and I are called as Christians to be working to build God's temple every day, and what we're called to do is to do that by pursuing peace and pursuing holiness, that these are really the two big picture things that we're called to do to build the temple. We pursue peace, we pursue holiness. We looked at that two weeks ago.

Then we saw that the work that we're called to do is a supernatural work. You can't really pursue true peace and unity apart from the power of God. You can't pursue true holiness apart from the power of God. You can't do these things in your own strength. To really be holy is not just to use a 12 step method to deal with an addiction and to replace that

addiction with a different kind of behavior. That's self-help. That is not biblical holiness. Biblical holiness is to turn from sin and be more devoted to God, there's a God-ward element that is dominant. It is to repent from sin, repentance toward God, that's holiness and that only God can do that, and only God can make true peace, only God can reconcile relationships so that there is real agape love, unconditional love, genuine, deep affection when there has been sin and division. God replaces that with true unity that approximates more and more the fellowship and the oneness of the Triune God in heaven. Jesus prayed that, "they may be One even as We are One, as I am in You and You are in Me, that they may be one." And we're called to that kind of unity. That's not merely a pretend, "Hey, I forgive you but I won't forget." No, you're to forgive as God forgives. God chooses not to remember our sins. Forgive others as he has forgiven you.

So it's a supernatural calling to build, the work that we're called to do is something we need his power to do, and then last Sunday we talked about the power that is available to us. The title of last week, this is not this week's title, the title of last week's message was "The Immeasurable but Largely Unrealized Power of God in the Church for the Work." Immeasurable power but unrealized largely, and that power is the resurrection power of Jesus; the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, exalted him to heaven, and enthroned him at the right hand of God, that is the power that we need to have our eyes opened to see and to be able to understand.

That's what we talked about last Sunday but there's another element that we need to consider today. It's one thing to know what the work is, to know how daunting and challenging it is, but to be setting to it, it's another to know that the power exists that can be brought to bear to do the work but you have to know how to access the power, to appropriate this power, and today's title is "Appropriating the Power of God in the Church for the Work." Appropriating the power of God in the church for the work. We're called every day to be pursuing holiness, we're called every day to be pursuing peace, and not just personal atomistic view of holiness, we're called to help one another pursue holiness, to get involved in each other's lives, to confront sin. That is love, true love and we're called to do that. We're called to help one another to turn from sin more and more. We're called to work and labor at loving one another but the power of God that is available in the resurrection of Christ has to become realized and that's the focus this morning.

Appropriating the power of God in the church for the work. We're asking the question: how do we appropriate this power? I mean, how does the power that raised Jesus from the dead become real in our experience? I mean, think about it, how hard it is to fight sin. We confessed earlier we've not been killing sin as we ought. Complacent. Often defeated. Discouraged. How do you lay hold of the power of God to really overcome deeply besetting, deeply entrenched sin patterns? In a word the answer we're going to see is faith. The way you bring the power of God to bear in your life is by faith.

We said last time that Paul, remember, was in Ephesians 1 was saying, "I pray that the eyes of your heart would be opened to see what is the hope of his calling, the riches of inheritance, and then the surpassing greatness of His power," and the idea is we can't see

it. We can't see the reality. We're blind to it even as Christians and we cannot see that which is invisible and we have to pray for the Spirit to open the eyes of our hearts to see these things. And so that's what we have to, we're trying to lay hold of something which is invisible to us and the only way to do that is by faith because faith does not look at the things which are visible. In fact, 2 Corinthians 4:18 says, "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal." There is an invisible component of God's creation that is every bit as real as what you and I can touch with our hands. In fact, Colossians 1:16 speaks of Jesus creating all things, all things were created by him and for him, and he speaks of he created all things, things visible and invisible. All the invisible things and he goes on to say kingdoms and dominions and powers and authorities. He's speaking about the demonic world, the angelic world that is real. You and I can't see that but it doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

I mentioned last time we can't hear sounds that other animals can hear. We can't see things that other animals can see but it doesn't mean that they don't exist, it just means we don't have the capacity to hear or to see all that really exists, and we can't see spiritual things but you can by faith lay hold of these things. And faith, in a sense, you think about it this way, we're trying to bring the power of God, the power of the resurrection to bear on real deep needs that can only be accomplished by the power of God. Jesus has done everything necessary but the way that we access that power is by faith, by believing in Jesus the same way we believed for our initial salvation. I mean, we believe salvation is by faith and salvation consists of your justification as well as your sanctification. That's what salvation is. And you're saved by faith alone, that means you're justified by faith alone – and listen to this – you're sanctified by faith alone. That is the biblical gospel.

So faith, if you think about it this way, you know, you've got a task to do at home and, say, let's go in the kitchen, it's a cooking task. We've been making smoothies trying to be a little healthier in our home and, you know, you take all this stuff and you put it together and it becomes a smoothie except it doesn't become a smoothie if you don't have the right tool to make those things become a smoothie. I mean, think how hard it would be to actually do it by hand, you know, we have like frozen stuff that you put in the smoothie, ice, etc., and then we have one of those, I forget what it's called, it's a heavy-duty blender and you flip the switch. But you know, if you flip the switch and it's not plugged in, it doesn't matter a hill of beans that you flipped the switch. And the plug, think about what a plug, how many appliances we have in our house and when you plug it into the outlet, the invisible power of electricity that we cannot see is brought to bear on the problem. Do you see that?

Faith is that which plugs us into the power of God and so we have to believe and we're believing in that which is unseen on the basis of God's testimony because faith is believing the word of God. It's not something you make up yourself, it's not name it claim it, it's not power of positive thinking. Faith is responding to the promise of God by trusting his word to be true. That's faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. You have to have heard the word of God. You have to have the word of God to have faith.

So we're trying to plug into the power of God that is made known to us in Christ. So it is by faith. We're going to read Romans 6:1-14 but we're going to be focusing in on verses 3 to 14 once verses 1 and 2 get us into the flow of what Paul's doing here. Romans 6:1,

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

Let me just stop for one moment here and explain the context. Paul has just explained the gospel of salvation and justification by faith alone, that God makes sinners right with him not by their own works of righteousness but entirely apart from what you or I can do, he gives righteousness as a gift. He justifies sinners as a free gift based on what he did in his Son. Jesus Christ was the propitiation for our sins as we sang about earlier. He took our robes so that he might give us his, and as he took our robes on the cross, he was clothed with our sins, he bore our sins in his body on the cross and he took our sins out of the way and he gives us righteousness as a gift which is received by faith alone. Now when Paul is explaining this in chapters 1 through 4, and then in chapter 5 he starts talking about the blessings upon the justified in verses 1 to 11, and then verses 12 to 21 the mechanics of how this actually works, and he basically says the same way Adam sinned and his whole race was condemned, in the same way Christ's one act of righteousness, in that mind he has his whole life and his cross and resurrection, that one act of Jesus, the obedience to God to come into the world and do this mission now justifies every single one who's in his family, in his race. He's the second Adam. There's a new humanity and if you're united to Christ then that is true of you. And so he says, he's explaining, "Hey, why was the law ever given in the first place?" This is late chapter 5. Well, the law was given so that sin might increase so we see how sinful we were and then we would run to Christ and where sin abounded there would grace much more abound. The law came and was given to show us how wicked we were and how much we needed a Savior, how much we needed a spotless lamb of God to take away our sins.

So where sin abounded there did grace much more abound and Paul, then, begins to address an accusation that was made against him and essentially it was this, that the gospel of free grace that Paul was teaching that the whole Bible teaches, the gospel of free grace is thought by many, even professing Christians, people who believe the Bible, the gospel of free grace is thought to be dangerous; that if you believe that God justifies you entirely apart from your works, why will you not live your life in wanton sin because it doesn't matter how you live. That's what he's saying in verse 1, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?" He is voicing the accusation of those who don't believe the gospel against him. The gospel Paul is preaching destroys righteousness, it destroys the law, it will lead to rampant wickedness among those who say they believe, and Paul basically his argument is this, if you really have understood the gospel, you understand that you have come to be united to Jesus, it is unthinkable that a person who has gone from darkness to light, has been born again, united to Christ, it is unthinkable and irrational to think they will continue to dwell in sin unchanged. Impossible. And he's going to explain why and it's because of union with Christ.

The two concepts that you want to get, big concepts in addition to the outline is faith is everything and union with Christ is everything. This is how God saves, you are united with Jesus by faith. Everything that is true of him is true of you. And what you're going to see is he's going to say things that you cannot see, you cannot touch or taste or smell or hear but these things are absolutely true because God says they are, and as you believe these things and it's all about union with Christ, it's about you being united to Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection, and if you believe these things, then you will experience the power of the resurrection in your life, and if you don't, if you instead choose to believe what you can see, what you can hear, you will live as a pauper using your own resources to fight sin which is way too great for you and me. That's essentially his argument.

So let's continue reading. I'll start over since I took such a long interlude between verse 1 and verse 1. We'll go back to verse 1.

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we ask now that by Your Holy Spirit You truly would open the eyes of our hearts to see and understand things that are far too wonderful for us but things which are absolutely true. Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to believe, hearts to obey for the glory of Your precious Son we pray. Amen.*

Appropriating the power of God in the church for the work. One of the things that we see here is that we are, the apostle is telling us that we have all the power we need, the power is there every moment of every day for you to be victorious over every single sin you encounter if you know Christ. The possibility, it's there that we would never sin again. Of course, we're going to sin, we sin every day, we sin multiple times a day. I love how Jerry Bridges, he opens one of his chapters and I think it was in "The Discipline of Grace," he opens one of his chapters by saying this guy was praying and he said, "Lord, I thank You. It's been a pretty good day." Well, he said, "Lord, I thank You that so far I've not coveted, I've not lusted, I've not spoken in anger today. So far today I've not had any of those sins but in a moment I'm going to roll over and get out of bed. Help me."

So to be in this world, to be still in this body with remaining sin is to battle sin every day as we confessed in our time of confession. You have to be killing sin or sin will be killing you, John Owen said. Sin does actively seek to reign but he's telling us in this passage sin's reign is a mirage in reality for the Christian. I mean, it's going to be something we fight against every day so it's counterintuitive what God says, it doesn't feel like what he says is true. But again, I implore you, it doesn't matter what it feels like, it matters what God has said. That's what's true.

So how do we plug into the power of God? We appropriate the power of God by faith and by faith in who we are now in Christ. All that Christ is, that's what we trust in, all that Christ has accomplished. Let's talk about this. What the apostle does here in this passage is we'll consider under three points. He says that if you're going to plug into the power of God, if you're going to live in the victory of the union with Christ in your pursuit of holiness you, first of all, need to, first point, know the truth of your union with Christ. Know the truth of your union with Christ. Too often we're completely ignorant of this and we don't have daily reminders of it. We wake up in the morning and we have that sin nature right there with us, we have the habituated thought patterns, the habituated affections that are alienated in many ways from things that we ought to love. We love things we ought not to love and we hate things we ought to love because of remaining sin, but we have a new heart that wants to live differently but it's trapped in this war and what he says, first of all, you must know the truth of your union with Christ. Verses 3 to 10 and verse 14 focus on this part.

Key word in the passage is "know" or "knowing." Look at verse 3, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Are you ignorant of the fact that this reality is there? If you've been baptized into Jesus, you were baptized into his death, you were united in his death. Do you not know, he says, verse 3. Look again at verse 6, "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him." Look at verse 9, "knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again." Knowing this. You see, you've got to know this. You must know the truth of your union with Christ.

It starts with knowledge and you're going to see that the outline basically, the three points of the outline really relate to the way theologians have defined faith throughout history. What is faith? Biblically what is faith? Like I said, it's not wishful thinking. In the world

today in so much of evangelicalism faith is whatever you want it to be. It's believing that you're going to get what you want. That's not biblical faith. It has nothing to do with what you or I want. All it has to do is with what God has said and when you believe in what God has said, that's faith but theologians break this down because faith is a wonderful, I mean, it's a key word in the Bible. Break it down in three parts. Faith consists of three things, it consists of, first of all, knowledge. To have faith, saving faith, you have to know the facts about Jesus. How can you believe in him of whom you've not heard? How will they hear without a preacher? They can't call upon the name of the Lord if they haven't heard of him and learned about him. You must know the truth.

Knowledge is the first part of faith. This is a little subset that's going to help you follow the outline. So knowledge is the first part, second is assent. You not only know the facts of the gospel but you assent, you agree with them. You have to come to accept them as true. There are many unbelievers who can illustrate the gospel and expel it exactly as the Bible teaches, that this is what the Bible says and they can explain it but they don't believe it, they don't assent to it. The demons could do that.

Knowledge, assent, and the third thing is trust. This is what faith, faith has three parts: knowledge, assent and trust. Trust means action, that you so believe it that you step out on it and you act on it, you cast yourself. So what happens when you're saved is, you hear the gospel about what Jesus has done for you, you assent that it is true, and you actively trust in him, you cast yourself upon him. That's faith and we're going to see that the same three things are needed in our sanctification that were needed in our justification. We have to have knowledge, we have to assent that it's true, and we have to then act on that, trust.

But the first point, we're back to the first point now, to know the truth of your union with Christ. Paul spends the first major part of this chapter instructing the Roman Christians in the knowledge they need to have. As I said, verses 3 to 10 and verse 14 are all about knowing the truth of your union with Christ. There are three subpoints under number 1, know the truth. He says there are three things that you need to know about your union with Christ.

The first thing is you need, this is A, 1A, you died with Christ to sin. This is what God says: if you have placed your faith in Christ and you have truly been born again, at the moment you were saved you were united to Christ and you died with Christ to sin. You died to the reign of sin. But you died with him, that's the important thing. Somehow God incorporated when you believed in him, his death became your death, his resurrection became your resurrection and it is true in the economy of God and the accounting of God this is reality, you died with Christ to sin. You see that in verse 3, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" You see it in the first part of verse 3, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death." Look at verse 6, "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him."

Now what you're going to see is we're not dead to the presence of sin, we're dead to the power of sin. Another way of saying it is we're not dead to the reality of sin, we're dead to the reign of sin. Sin's reign has been broken by your death with Christ. You died with Christ to sin, that's the first subpoint. Know the truth, you've got to know that you died to Christ with sin, that's 1A. 1B, you have to know that you were raised with Christ to a new life. If you're a Christian you have been raised already, past tense. The dominant tense in these verses is past tense, Greek aorist, punctiliar action in past time. These are things that happened. You died to sin. You now were raised to new life. It's not something that's going to happen in the future merely, your physical body is going to be raised later but you spiritually, your soul died and your soul has been raised. You see this in verse 4B. After he says, "Therefore," verse 4, "we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection." Look at verse 8, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."

So we were raised with Christ, you have to believe this, and then the third subpoint, C, 1C, things you have to know, not only you died with Christ to sin, you were raised with Christ to a new life, thirdly, this new life is entirely outside the realm of sin's authority. This new life that you have is entirely outside the realm of sin's authority. Now listen carefully. It's not outside the realm of sin's activity, of course, but it is entirely outside the realm of the authority of sin. You have been taken from the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of his beloved Son. As he says in verse 14, "sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." You've been moved from being under law and under sin to being under grace, removed from the realm of sin's authority. I know this is difficult stuff but this is so essential and important so hang in there.

You have to know the truth of your union with Christ but, secondly, you have to, the second point, main point this morning is you have to count it to be true of you. Count this to be true of you. This is the imperative. Actually it's the first true imperative in the whole book of Romans. This is it, Romans 6:11. Five and half chapters indicative, indicative, indicative, indicative, indicative, and then after this is going to be more indicative, indicative, indicative, indicative, until late in chapter 11 and it starts getting to the imperatives again because Romans is mostly about knowing what God has done for you and then later now what are you supposed to do. But here he's talking about what God has done in Christ and he gives some imperatives here too because you've got to apply this.

Count it to be true of you. Look at verse 11, key word in the passage, this is the first command in the book of Romans, "Even so consider," consider, "yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Even so, in the same way I've been talking about. Jesus died to sin, he rose to newness of life, in the same way consider this to be true of you. Count it so.



This word "consider" is a very rich word. I mentioned it's an imperative. It's a command, it's not a suggestion but the word translated "consider" in the New American Standard that I'm reading is translated "count" if you're reading the NIV, "reckon" if you're reading the King James, "reckon it so." But the Greek word *logizomai*, l-o-g-i-z-o-m-a-i is the transliteration, l-o-g-i you see logic, it's a word which means to think but it has specific aspect of think, it means "to count; to calculate; to compute." To count, to calculate, to compute and add one more "c" and "to conclude." To count, to calculate, to compute, and to conclude. It has the idea of careful thought, sustained inquiry, detailed investigation, gathering up all the pertinent data and then based on all of that data being gathered, making an informed conclusion, a rational deduction. From all of these other propositions, this therefore must be true.

I love the idea of counting and calculating. You know, you count and you say you're doing your taxes or you're working through your bank statement, remember how we used to have to balance bank statements in the old checkbook and everything? Now you're online doing that. But anyway you're looking and you're seeing does this make sense, is this right, is everything accounted for? What he's saying is, look, you have all of this data available to you, you have the lust of your flesh, you have the presence of sin in you, you have the experience of people around you also struggling, you have this world system, the devil lying to you, you have all of that data in the world and you have the word of the living God. And Jesus himself has made himself an offering for sin, he came to save us and to bring us to himself and to save us from sin in all of its forms, and when you're united to Christ his death is your death, his resurrection is your resurrection, his victory is your victory. So you count it all up, you look at all of the struggles you have, you look at the word of God and you make the only logical conclusion that a sane person who's thinking rightly makes, that what God says, a God who cannot lie says I'm dead to sin therefore I am dead to sin. A God who cannot lie says I'm alive to righteousness therefore I am alive to righteousness. The most logical thing.

It's insanity to believe your senses over what you know to be true. It's like thinking that the sound doesn't exist because you don't hear it and I have even more, many of you have challenges hearing, I have since I was 5-6 years old. I lost the extended range of my hearing, lows and highs, 30% in my right ear, 40% in my left ear, just shrunk down the hearing range. This is why sometimes if I have answered you with something really odd, like you said my dog died and I said, oh, that's great to hear that, I might have said that about a cat. No, just kidding but I would never have said that about a dog. I wouldn't say that about a cat either. I just wouldn't hurt as bad for you. No, I even take that back too. You see, the battle with sin continues.

But think about the range of hearing is shrunk down so there are things that I don't hear but those things are real. My wife hears them and so if I act like she hears something and I say, no, it's not, that's not real, I don't hear it, I'm just being a fool. The Bible says that you're dead to sin. I don't see it. I don't feel it. You can be a fool if you want to or you can believe that what God who knows all things says to be true. That's what this means to consider it, to count it to be true of you, to look at it and to count it and determine that I will accept that as true, that is on the ledger now.

And we have to continue, this is a present tense verb, it means go on counting it to be true. It's a daily battle to believe this and you must keep on believing it. In fact, it's really interesting, the emphatic construction in the verse, verse 11, doesn't come out as much as it does in the original. "Even so consider yourselves," it really, the force of the Greek is like this, "Even so you yourselves consider yourselves." That's what it says. He adds in an unnecessary pronoun to emphasize the reality. You must apply this to you. Apply this to your life, to your circumstances, apply this to every single time you battle sin, apply it to your personal struggle. Consider it to be true. We walk by faith and not by sight. God says it, that settles it.

So you've got to know the truth of your union with Christ, you have to count the truths of your union to Christ to be true of you and, thirdly, you have to act on the truth of your union with Christ. Third main point this morning: act on the truth. He has three more imperatives. There was one imperative in verse 11, consider; verse 12 there is the imperative do not let sin reign; that's the first imperative and there's going to be two in verse 13, don't go on presenting but present. So we're going to look at those three imperatives because that's really what it means to act on this. Remember faith isn't just knowing, faith isn't just assenting, faith is knowing, assenting and acting on what you know to be true. That's faith. That's why James can say faith without works is dead because faith must work, faith must act.

So act on the truth, these three imperatives here. Don't let sin reign. Now here you see the reality of God acknowledges that, hey, you're in a battle, you're in a daily battle. The fact that you have been saved and have been seated at the right hand of the throne of God, according to Ephesians 2:6, you've been seated in the heavenly places in Christ already, in some way spiritually that is real, that has happened, yet we're still in this world in our bodies and we're not disconnected, our spirit is not up there miraculously and we're here, somehow this is all at the same time. Apparently it's like the spiritual reality is laid over on top of this, we just can't see it, and as I say that, I know once you start thinking about that, it starts messing with your mind and we're not meant to do that. That's why God doesn't spend that much time talking about these things. He's basically saying, "Listen, know this to be true. Act on it."

Don't let sin reign but what that says is sin will always seek to reign. Sin will always seek to reign, that's the nature of sin but you've been delivered from the reign of sin but you still can give in to the reign of sin, that's the paradox. Don't let it reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts. Now this is so helpful to think about this. If you really take this and you meditate on this, and these are passages, these are truths that need to be meditated on to allow them to sink deep into the heart, when you and I sin, even the sins that we find most seductive, the things that we find that appeal to us the most, we think we're doing something we want to do. It feels like that, doesn't it? I mean, when you let off steam in anger and you might, you know, hit something or yell, it feels good. When you gratify sexual desires, it feels good. When you do other things, you seek the approval of men more than the approval of God, it feels good.

So sin, it has an appeal. It feels like home but the reality is it's not home. In fact, the reality is it's something so foreign to us that it is insane that we ever do it. It used to be our home but it's not our home now. We've been delivered from the reign and rule of sin. All this stuff about you being dead to sin is you are not dead to the possibility of sin but you are dead to the reign of sin. Sin no longer has authority over you. So every time you and I sin, what he says we do is we actively choose to let sin reign in our members, and he's talking about not just our physical body, this is our mind, our affections, and our physical members of our body. When you give yourself to sin, say you yell in anger, you allow your heart to be thinking in selfish self-focused ways about your rights. Somebody, you know, pulls out in front of you and you say something, "I can't believe that, you know, that nut did that," or whatever, and you vent that, maybe you speed up a little bit to let them know that they pulled out in front of you, what you're doing is you're letting sin have control of your members. It's like you're giving, think about this, it's like giving the car keys to a precious, you know, brand new car that you have to a 12 year old and saying, "Hey, take it for a spin." Never driven before. Can't even see completely over. "Just go ahead, have a great time."

That's what it is. Sin is giving the control of your members completely over to a foreign, and it's even worse than that, it's a foreign hostile power. You're letting sin come into your house, your turf that Christ has bought, and you're inviting it in and then he says you don't go on presenting your members as instruments of unrighteousness, presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Don't go on presenting. The idea is you're doing it now stop presenting. An image that I've used before and I think is a helpful image to me is if someone shows up at your door and they want to invade your home and they want to hurt your family and take your stuff, possibly kill all of you, how stupid it would be to open the door to let them in. That would be stupid, wouldn't it? That would be letting sin reign, inviting them in. But it's worse than that. This is talking about they come into your house, they want to hurt your family, burn your house down, and then you give them a gun and you give them a knife and you present to them whatever they need to do what they want to do. "Hey, oh, you need a sledgehammer? I've got one down in the basement. I'll go and get it. You need a gun? I've got a gun. Here, you can use it."

He says that's what's happening when you and I sin. We are giving our members to a foreign power that wants to destroy us and everything good and beautiful in our lives. That is just incredibly stupid, isn't it? Well, he says stop, stop presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments. In fact, that word "instruments" there in verse 13, you may have, I have a footnote in my New American Standard Bible that says "weapons," because the word is normally used of weapons. Stop presenting your members as weapons of unrighteousness to sin.

So that's the second imperative, stop presenting, don't go on presenting. The third is but present yourselves to God. This is faith acting. You're tempted to sin and you remember, "Wait a minute, I don't have to do this. Even though it feels like home, this isn't my home. This isn't where I'm really being who I am." To be authentic is to run from sin, not to give into sin. And so I see that and now I've got to stop presenting my members, I'm

not going to allow my tongue to be used to say that harsh word, I'm going to stop presenting my tongue to sin. No, I'm not going to allow it to be used by sin but, listen, you haven't won the battle until you do the next thing. You don't just put off the old man, you put on the new man. He says this, "present yourselves to God."

It's interesting, it's not a strict parallel. Don't go on presenting your members to sin, you would think but present your members to God, wouldn't you? That would be parallel but there's a point in the middle, present yourselves to God and present your members. First of all, present yourselves. You go to God personally. You go to the Lord and say, "Lord, look, here I am." This is how we should be responding to sinful temptation, "Here I am, Lord, being tempted to give over and I've already started down the road of giving over my members to sin in this circumstance. Look at me."

Now what Satan wants to do is he comes along and says, "Look at you. You'll never change. Just go ahead and do it, just go ahead and give into it because you always do it anyway." That's what Satan says. That's what your flesh says. What God is doing in that moment is saying, "Stop. Don't go on presenting. You may have been presenting all the way up to this moment your members, but take them back. They belong to you, not to sin." Stop presenting them but the way you're going to take them back is you stop for a moment, "I'm not going to keep doing this," and you go to God. You present yourselves to God directly. You've got to be connected to Christ. "Lord, I belong to You for I was bought with a price. I'm Yours and I'm presenting myself to You. My members are not my own."

I love how he draws that out in 1 Corinthians 6:18, it says, "Flee sexual immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the sexual immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." You remember, "Lord, I belong to You. I'm going to present myself to You and my members to You." And what you need to do in that moment is put on the opposite. If it was lust that you're running from, sexual immorality, put on thankfulness and praise and other-centered service, rather than self-seeking gratification and lust put on thanksgiving and service. Thank God for what he's given you and serve others. If it's anger, put off those words of bitterness and harshness that would tear someone down and put on edifying, loving words. See what the need of the moment is, Ephesians 4:29, "Let no unwholesome speech proceed from your mouth but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment so that it would give grace to those who hear." You want to use words that tear down, stop, instead speak words that minister grace, that meet needs.

That's putting off and putting on, that is not presenting your members to sin, stop doing that and to present your members, yourself to God and your members as instruments of righteousness to God, and when you do that, when you look to Christ, you lay hold of his power. He gives you his power. Now you're not going to feel it as a rush of power like an electric shock, but you must believe and you walk by faith and the way faith is, faith is

always stepping on the promise when you don't see evidence of it with your eyes because we walk by faith not by sight.

So many images of this in the Bible, how you had to step out on faith. One of my favorite is when the nation of Israel entered into Canaan after Moses' death, Joshua was ready to lead them into Canaan and the Lord told them to put the priests in front with the ark of the covenant, and that the priests were to march with the ark of the covenant symbolizing God's presence, and they were to step into the Jordan. This happened to be at the time of year when the rains had swollen the banks of the Jordan to its highest level. Every year the rains in Israel come at certain periods and this was during that time and the Jordan is overflowing its banks, and the priest carrying the ark of the covenant, I mean, they're carrying the Holy of Holies, that contents of the Holy of Holies, the ark of the covenant and they had to step into the water and the water did not go back until their feet hit the water. Then the water went back. And that's so it is with us. You have to act on it.

So turning away from sin means getting away from your computer if you're looking at something you shouldn't be looking at. Walking away from it, putting your mind on something else, not continuing to dwell on negative thinking and things that make you angry but giving your heart to God and being thankful and loving and trying to minister to others. Know the truth of your union with Christ, you died with Christ to sin, you're raised with Christ in newness of life, you're outside the realm of sin, count it to be true and then act on that truth. It doesn't matter how you feel, the reality is what God has said, and as we walk in that, we will experience more and more victory and God is glorified by he's going to do this little by little, moment by moment, you walk by faith not by sight day by day.

There's an analogy of this too. I mentioned Canaan, when they went into Canaan he could have wiped out all of the Canaanites with one battle, they could all have gathered together, he could have killed them all at once but the Lord didn't do that. He let them by battle after battle after battle after battle after battle because he wanted them to be dependent upon him because God is interested in a relationship, not just self-help. He doesn't just want to make you pure so you can be pure and feel good about yourself that, "Hey, I'm no longer as bad as I was." He wants to make you pure so that you can be more devoted to him and love him and treasure him as your all-in-all, and the way he does that is by teaching us day by day, moment by moment, temptation by temptation, to rest in Christ. That's the best way and God help us pursue holiness.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Father, we're so grateful to You for the salvation You've given us in Jesus. We pray that You will help us get to the work and be more faithful in the work of pursuing true holiness and help us do it with the vast resources that You've made known to us in Jesus Christ. Lord, there are folks here today who need to really make some radical adjustments in their lives. We come to a God who sees all things and knows all things. You see our hearts. You see the sin in our lives, things that no one else sees, You see. Lord, help us to do what You are calling us to do. Help us to take the action that we need*

*to take. Help us to confess our sins to one another, to reach out to our brothers and sisters for help, to make ourselves accountable not because we want to lean on the arm of flesh, no, Lord, we want to do what You've called us to do, use all the resources we have in the body of Christ. Thank You, Lord, that You have called us to be free and if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. We pray in His name. Amen.*