
“Weapons For Righteousness”

ROMANS 6:12-14

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AT A GLANCE

The members of our body can be used for righteous or unrighteous purposes. As followers of Christ, we have been set free from sin's power and are free to choose how we use these “weapons” or “instruments.” Let us decide to use our bodies to the glory of God and the good of others!

INTRODUCTION

Because of Christ's death on the cross, we have been released from the reign of sin! Because Christ was raised from the dead and lives to God, we have been given new life to live to God. As such we are to determine in our minds and hearts that we are dead to sin and alive to God.

“Repeat it until you believe it.” You have been made new, so live new. Now Paul supplies the practical means by which to live a new life to God.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 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. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Verse 12 reads **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.**

Let not sin...reign in your mortal body. Continually reminding yourself that you've been set free from sin, continually resist the sin impulses so that sin no longer reigns.

Implied here is that sin did once reign in your mortal body. Sin dominates the life of a person before Christ. But that changes at our spiritual rebirth, conversion. When the Holy Spirit makes you alive together with Christ, you are released from the tyrannous reign of sin.

However, what is also implied is that sin is still a wrestle in the life of a born-again believer. If Paul was addressing non-Christians, there would be no point. They remain dead in sin. If sin wasn't an issue in the life of a born-again believer, why would he need to make this statement?

Sin continues to be a wrestle for a believer. That is why he said **Let not sin...reign.** It's a struggle, but the believer, while not immune to temptation, is free from the reign of sin. If sin reigns, we're letting sin reign.

Matthew Henry reminds us of an essential truth, “You wrestle with an enemy that may be dealt with and subdued; it is an enemy that is already foiled and baffled.” We fight against a defeated enemy. In Christ, you are no longer ruled in your mortal body by sin.

The **mortal body** is broken, carnal, & fleshly. It has carnal impulses. Your whole life up until the moment of conversion you have trained yourself to give in to the impulses of your body. You find a way to do what you want to do. You want to sleep in, hit the snooze button. You want to indulge, help yourself to more. You want to view explicit content, click.

Our natural instinct is to satisfy our fleshly impulses. Sin reigns in our mortal bodies. Paul's exhortation is that you make up your mind that your body isn't in control any longer!

This is one good reason to fast. It teaches our spirit to discipline our mind to deny our body's fleshly impulses. The impulse to feed ourselves during a fast drives us to prayer and forces us to rely upon Christ. It's a violent submission of our flesh by our spirit. And this is how we ought to respond to any fleshly impulse that does not honor God. Fasting trains us to deny the impulses of the flesh. So do other physical disciplines like exercise and eating a healthy diet.

Done to the glory of God and for His purposes, this is spiritual fitness. So many people are spiritually weak with very little discipline and very little control over their fleshly impulses. When we do not exercise our spirit through disciplines, like fasting, prayer, scripture reading, fellowship, worship, giving, and I would include forcing ourselves to do things that are hard, we fail to gain spiritual strength and we find it difficult to not let sin reign in our mortal bodies.

Our goal is that we no longer **obey the passions** of our body. We do not want to be controlled by our sinful flesh since we have been set free from sin.

Paul is telling us that because of who we are in Christ, we must go to war with our flesh. **Let not...** Do not let. Stop. Prevent sin from reigning in your mortal body.

To reign is to exert control and power. It is to be kingly; to dominate. Sin was once a power that controlled your entire body. And to overthrow a power like sin requires violence. In this case, we are to exert spiritual violence against our own sinful impulses! We read of taking every thought captive. That's violent. We speak of putting our flesh to death. That's violent.

Paul also used the word obey. **Sin reigned in your body to make you obey its passions.** Sin submitted you! We obeyed our impulses. Once again Ephesians 2 reminds us of the reality of our lives before Christ. *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. Ephesians 2:1-3*

Not only did we obey the passions of our flesh, the passion of the flesh was animated and motivated by the prince of the power of the air – Satan. So, we obeyed our flesh, which was really following Satan; that's our default setting. Not a flattering description.

So now that we've been set free in Christ, we're commanded to no longer obey the passions of our flesh. This again requires violence. It requires resistance. It requires a change of loyalty. Obedience to Christ requires disobedience to Satan and the flesh. To say yes to Jesus is to say no to the most powerful force at work in this world - your flesh, motivated by the Devil.

Christian, this is where human effort meets with God's power. In the words of R.C. Sproul, "Now we have the responsibility to cooperate with the grace that God makes available to us." He has freed us from our captivity to sin. Now live as free people and no longer let sin reign over you.

In **verse 13** Paul unpacks this a little more. **Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness...** We are physical and spiritual creatures. We have a unified body and spirit. Our spirit will live forever, and our body will die and be resurrected in the end. When you are born again of the Holy Spirit, your hard, dead hearts are made alive together with Christ. This is spiritual life.

And this spiritual life inhabits your material body. The material body has members, and the members have impulses. But the spirit can overcome the impulses of the body. Paul exhorts us **Do not present your members to sin.** In other words, do not use your body as **instruments for unrighteousness.**

Present here is in the present tense. “Do not keep presenting” your members to sin. This is the image of our former manner of life. This is how we used to live. We used to keep presenting over and over again.

Most scholars see military imagery here. The word translated in the ESV **instruments** is also translated in other versions of the Bible as “weapons.” This is how the same word is translated in other letters of Paul. So, you have this idea of presenting weapons to a power that is reigning over you.

I can’t help but think of a “pass and review.” It’s a military drill and ceremony maneuver in which a formation of troops marches before the commanding officer and renders a salute at the command “present arms.” Depending on the weapons being carried, they are either lowered or turned toward the front, but essentially, they are put on display and “presented” as available to wage the war at the command of the one in charge.

So you have this picture here, Paul is saying stop presenting the members of your body to sin. Stop showing this reigning power called sin your body parts, like “Hey, my tongue is ready to be used as a **weapon for unrighteousness**. Here’s my ears, use them. My hands, you got ‘em. My feet, they’re swift to shed blood! My eyes, where do you want me to look?” Refuse to allow the parts of your body to be used as a weapon for wickedness.

Verse 13 continues. **but present yourselves to God...and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.** There’s something interesting in this verse. The word **present** used here is in the aorist tense whereas before it was in the present tense. Perhaps its nothing, but these little gold nuggets are worth exploring.

The aorist tense indicates a completed action. There is a decisive action. “I sold my motorcycle.” That happened in 2004 when Kennedy was just a little less than a year old. I took one decisive action. I didn’t have to continue selling my bike. I had conviction and I sold my motorcycle. Complete and decisive.

Now let’s look at this in context. Stop continually presenting your body parts to sin and instead **present yourselves to God**. Draw a line in the sand. Decide something today. Grow a backbone. Determine something today.

Joshua boldly told the people of Israel, “*Choose this day whom you will serve! As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*” *Joshua 24:15* He told Israel to pick sides...today. This day. Choose a side.

Determine right now that you are going to make **yourselves** available **to God**! Man would I love to call for a pass and review and lead you all past King Jesus! See Lord, see all these people who have determined right now that we will make ourselves available to you to do with us whatever you want! Wouldn’t that be amazing?!

Paul said in *Romans 12:1*, “*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*”

Notice the imagery: to present something is to lay it down, to devote it to God’s service, to use it for His glory. Do this with your whole body, your whole self. Notice, too, this is worship. We live our worship. We certainly gather to sing and praise and that is worship. But that is not the fullness of our worship. Life is worship for the believer.

Notice that our bodies can be used as **instruments for unrighteousness** or **instruments for righteousness**. The choice is ours. When Paul says **instruments**, or as I prefer “weapons,” **for righteousness** he is describing their purpose. Our body parts - our mouths, eyes, ears, feet, you name it, are to be used as weapons for righteousness; to achieve what is pleasing to God.

We can use our mind for good or for evil. The same brain that lusts, covets, and conspires can be used to glory in true beauty, be grateful for what you have, and strategize kingdom growth. The same hands that can kill, mutilate, and wound can also heal, restore, and bind up.

The same tongue that gossips, slanders, and maligns, can also praise, encourage, and defend. The feet that can lead you the adulterer, the liquor store, or the department store one too many times, can also take the gospel to the nations, carry someone's burden, and run to the aide of the helpless.

The point is, you have been given a body and everything you do is done with the members of your body. Because you have died with Christ and have been set free from sin, you now have the choice to use the members of your body to do what is **righteous** or what is **unrighteous**.

Now I want you to notice that sandwiched between those two imperatives is an indicative. Once again, we are reminded of our identity, of where we get the power to make this choice to present ourselves to God and the members of our body as weapons for righteousness.

Paul says we are **those who have been brought from death to life**. Something essential has changed in the believer. He or she has been brought from death to life.

Our dead hearts have been quickened and we have been given a new nature. Because of this, Paul can say with confidence in **verse 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace**.

You reign in life because you have received the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness of Jesus Christ. Death and sin and the Law no longer dominate you. Matthew Henry said, we are "Not under the covenant of works, which requires brick, and gives no straw, but under the covenant of grace, which accepts sincerity as our gospel perfection, which requires nothing but what it promises strength to perform."

Sin no longer reigns in your body and the Law no longer reigns over your head. You are under grace, and you reign in life. So live.

I desire to be a man after God's own heart, don't you? I want to offer my entire body to the service of the Lord. I frequently say to the Lord, "Here are my eyes, let me behold only what honors you. Here are my hands, let me handle only what honors you. Here are my feet, help me go where you want me to go. Here is my heart, help me to long for only what honors you. Here is my mind, help me dwell upon only what honors you."

Examine your heart. It is easy to say you love God with all your heart. But will you serve Him with your eyes, your hands, your feet, your mouth? Will you choose today to present yourself to God and the members of your body as weapons for righteousness?

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