

97-03-02a

Scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1. This is a passage that we visit and revisit from time to time. It is such a wonderful, clear expression of the things that count in our lives as believers. Paul is writing to the church at Colossae, and as he does several places in his writings, he expresses to them the content of his prayers for them to God.

And in the content of this prayer, we have Paul's ambitions, his hopes, and his desire for believers. If there was anyone who understood the goal of our life as believers, if there's anyone who knew what it was that really counts, and what to ask God for on behalf of other believers, it was the Apostle Paul. So these are fascinating glimpses into what the priorities are and what really counts.

And we can gain much by studying these and remembering how Paul intercedes on behalf of fellow believers. He says in Colossians chapter 1, verse 3, We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ever since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. That gospel has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth, as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, for all patience and long-suffering with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. We have this wonderful section that comes up next in Paul's opening remarks in this letter that deals with Jesus Christ.

And it's important for us to realize that all of the purposes that we pursue, all of the goals that we seek to achieve, all of the priorities that we set in the life that we live, is through and for the sake of Jesus Christ. And it's wonderful to dwell on him as Paul does here in this next section. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things consist.

And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in all things he may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him all the fullness should dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross. And you who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now he has reconciled in the body of his flesh through death to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in his sight.

If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. May God add his blessing to the reading and the hearing of his word this morning. There are so many wonderful principles in that section of Scripture, things that we've been studying recently, having to do with what the content of the gospel is, what the purpose of our life as believers is, how that our faith, our hope, and our love, the three primary elements in our spiritual well-being, are nourished up and strengthened and brought to the point of fruition of our lives bearing fruit through knowledge of the word of God, having the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

And seeing the priority of that step and that function in our lives of being rooted and grounded in the word so that our faith and our hope and our love are enabled and empowered by God, equips and prepares us to bear fruit and to reflect the glory of God. And that, in a nutshell, is our life and our calling as believers. It's so easy to get distracted, and it's so easy to be embroiled in the affairs of this life, to be consumed by the need to deal with circumstances, whether the pressures of daily life or the requirements that are often placed on us by others.

Even our own fellow believers can often put subtle forms of pressure on us, and their expectations pull on the instincts of our nature. We instinctively want to be approved. We instinctively want to be accepted.

We instinctively want the approbation and the goodwill of those around us. And it produces all kinds of conscious and subconscious stress in our souls when we realize that we don't have that goodwill. We don't have that approval.

We're not accepted. We are thought to be in error. We are thought to be failing or falling short.

And it's amazing because in our mind, we can look at someone and say, you know, this person is really not qualified to judge. This person doesn't have good standards. This person doesn't have the authority or the, it's not their place to pass judgment on me.

And even when our logical mind recognizes all of those things, deep in our soul we still feel pressure and we still feel stress from being on the outs with someone in our periphery. And we can try to dismiss and disregard and render their whole opinion invalid in the logical part of our mind, but in the instinctive part of our soul we still feel pressure. What is it that counteracts that

internal pressure? It's the Word of God.

What is it that shifts the landscape in our soul so that that diminishes in our perspective and recedes into the distance and other things influence us and other things concern us more? It's the reality of God. It's the reality of Jesus Christ. He is acceptable.

All authority in heaven and in earth has been given to Jesus Christ. God looks at us. God evaluates us.

And as we present ourselves before God, and when that is more real to us than our presentation, our aspect before people, that's what diminishes and lets the air out of that pressure and that instinctive desire that is built into us that's a part of our nature. That's what we're going to be looking at this morning. We are in one of the most fascinating sections of the Word of God here after giving us many chapters of discussion of the plan of God and the things that count in God's eyes, what it is that God is looking for when He evaluates us.

This is the very thing that Paul has been addressing in Romans, isn't it? Beginning in chapter 1, verse 15, and going all the way up to the end of chapter 11, Paul has been discussing this tension, this conflict between what the run of humanity considers important and considers valuable and considers right, and what God considers. We have to learn to think in terms of the invisible. I had a very good question emailed to me this week asking about the conversation that Jesus has with Nicodemus back in John chapter 3, and probably the most famous verse in the whole Bible, certainly in the whole New Testament.

What's the one verse that almost anybody has memorized in the whole New Testament? It's John 3.16, isn't it? God so loved the world. Well, what is the occasion for that verse being present? It flows out of the discussion that Jesus has with Nicodemus, who comes to Jesus by night. The chapter begins with Nicodemus coming to Jesus by night.

Who is Nicodemus? He's a Pharisee. He's up there in the esteem of the Jews, both the general population and the Pharisees and so forth. He's up there where decisions are made.

He's a part of the leadership in the religious structure. And when it says he comes to Jesus by night, we think, well, this sort of sets an interesting tone and so forth. But why is he coming by night? Because he doesn't want to be seen.

He doesn't want to be associated in the minds of the people, in the minds of his fellow religious leaders, as having anything to do with Christ. So right away, this concern that we're talking about, of what are people going to think, you can tell that this is plaguing Nicodemus. He's got an eye on the future.

He didn't get to where he is by disregarding the opinions of people. He's playing that political game. And some of us were discussing recently the things that happen as you elevate in rank in

the military, how that becomes more and more a part of your career path.

And the ability to survive and get your 20 years in and start collecting your retirement depends a lot on whether you can play that game and not find yourself in the bad graces of someone whose opinion really counts. I'm digressing further and further from my main point here, but it's funny, I had a fellow instructor at Fort Sill, and we were on equal terms. He and I fought very differently.

We were on opposite ends of the spectrum. I completely disregarded his opinion, but I found myself considering what his opinion meant because his next duty station was at Headquarters Marine Corps as the detailer, as the person who decided what officer was going to get what assignment. And suddenly, you know, it's very favorable to know somebody that's at that level of decision-making and, hey, Mike, remember me, you know, and so forth.

And you have to struggle with that and say, you know, you're promoted when God promotes you. You go where God wants you to be, and your fate does not depend on what this person thinks or what their opinion is, but it really becomes a matter of practical application. This is where Nicodemus sat, and this is the tension that Paul is addressing in Romans.

See, these things really do all tie together. This is the tension that Paul is addressing in Romans because that's the lever that the Judaizers are using throughout the Christian church to lever people back into conformity to the law of Moses. It's peer pressure.

They're saying, you're not righteous. We are not going to accept you. We're going to try to lay a big guilt trip on you if you don't observe these ritual things that we consider to be important.

Well, what does Paul inject into that situation? What does he put into the souls of these believers to give them the ability to disregard that, that the Jews are the old-timers in terms of relationship with God? They can claim tradition. They can claim heritage. They can claim all of the things that Paul talks about at the beginning of chapter 9 of Romans.

To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, which is a phrase we're going to return to this morning, and the promises. From them are the fathers, and from whom according to the flesh Christ came. They've got all of these things that commend them.

They've got this weight of privilege and of status. And so their opinion is going to count. And some Gentile that comes into the church and it's predominantly Jewish and they came to Christ first, and they've got the Old Testament there.

Yes, we were the first to trust in Christ. Paul identifies himself as one of those in Ephesians chapter 1. And so this is really an uphill struggle for a Gentile believer to be able to set aside the weight of all of that opinion and of that exhortation and urging from that quarter and to pursue something different. And that's what Paul is up against.

And he's not even there personally. He's having to do this via a letter. So what does he do? He writes Romans.

And he argues from Scripture. He argues from the Old Testament examples. He uses the very same things that the Judaizers are using to try to lever people into righteousness by works and righteousness by pure approval.

And he says if you want to know what righteousness is, it's what pleases God. And here are the things that pleases God. God is pleased when you trust Him.

God is pleased when you treat what He says as reality in the face of all of these circumstances, all of these people and their opinions and their pressure and that internal pressure that comes from your desire to be approved by them. This is what counteracts it. This is what has the power to overturn it in your soul.

And based on that, he now is going to say in chapter 12, I'm urging you to do something. Now that you have this information, make it the object of your faith and here are the actions that should result. Here's the policy that you should set.

Here are the priorities that should pertain in your life as a believer. So he says, again, in one of the most familiar verses in the New Testament, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Obviously, this is the pivot point in this letter. This is the pivot point in Paul's argument. You have these terms in debate or in presentation of prothesis and apothesis.

Proto, that's what comes first. Apo, that's what comes after. And the prothesis in an argument is your supposition.

This is your given. You say, here is a fact. That's the prothesis.

The apothesis is, because of that, here's the conclusion. Here's a fact and here's the conclusion. Paul has given the facts in these first ten and a half chapters and now he's drawing the conclusion.

And this is one of the biggest therefore's in the Bible in Romans 12.1. He's arguing on the basis of the mercies of God. God, in His compassion, in His mercy, has made this opportunity available. He has opened up the opportunity to bear fruit, to reflect His glory, to fulfill His purpose, to matter and to make a difference in the plan of God to anyone.

It's not just happening in the nation of Israel anymore. It's the mercy of God. God has set aside the people of promise.

His covenant people to make this mercy available. It's a big deal. It's something God has done in an extraordinary fashion.

It's something that Paul has talked about and has labeled as mercy in these preceding chapters. And he says, if you have any sort of a concept of the magnitude of the mercy of God in making this available, I'm presenting this to you on the basis of God's mercy. I urge you, based on this mercy that God has bestowed, to do something.

And the thing that He asks them to do is to present their bodies as a living sacrifice. Now, in a quick reading of this, we have applications of service. We have applications of ministry.

People go into full-time Christian service or vocational Christian ministry on the basis of this verse. Present your bodies. Okay, I'm going to drop everything.

I'm going to be a missionary. I'm going to be an evangelist. I'm going to be a pastor.

I'm going to be a full-time person in Christian service. And most of us are well aware of the fact that every believer is a full-time servant of God. Everything that we do composes our service.

Our service consists in our daily life. We are all vocational, full-time Christians. We have no lesser responsibility than an evangelist or a missionary or a pastor or any other person that is labeled as a full-time Christian servant or a full-time vocational Christian.

And theirs is no greater. Ours is no less. It's the same.

So when he says, present your bodies a living sacrifice, what is he really saying? All of us are vocational Christians. He's not calling us to something above and beyond. He's not saying, abandon your job and your career and do something that is labeled Christian because all of us have already been called that.

We have been bought with a price. We are not our own. And it's our calling to glorify God in our body.

So what is he saying here when he says, I beseech you. I've made these arguments in the preceding pages. And now, in the light of that, I'm urging you to present your bodies a living sacrifice.

What is he talking about? Well, it helps us to understand what this word present means. And we looked at that last week. We saw that this word, *parastasi*.

Para meaning alongside. *Parallel* is one of our words that comes from that. And the last half of that, the *stasis*, the standing that takes place.

We get status from this word. Where things stand. What the status quo is.

The apostasy comes from this. That's the last part of that. Apo means away from.

Stasis, to stand. Apostasy, to stand away. You're separate from something.

You've departed something. You have left something. If you're an apostate, you've left the faith.

And of course, we have our rapture passage where he says that day will not come where the Antichrist is revealed and so forth except there come first the apostasy. And in many Bibles, it's translated the rebellion. But in its most root concept, apostasy means to depart, to stand away.

And it's a reference to the rapture. That day will not come except there comes first the departure, the standing away. And it's the standing away of the church.

He says don't let anyone trouble you in mind and so forth in Thessalonians that that day has already come. That day can't come unless there comes first the departure. Then the man of sin is revealed.

Then he will exalt himself and so forth. Do you not remember when I was with you? I told you these things. So now you know what it is that inhibits.

Now you know what it is that keeps that from happening. It's the presence of the church. When the presence of the church is removed, when it stands away, then these things will take place.

So he says comfort each other with these words. Don't be troubled in your minds. So that means to stand.

So when we say present, we say we're going to have something stand alongside. It's going to be put out there to stand. It's going to be separated from the group that it started out in and it's going to stand beside that group.

It's going to be brought out for presentation, for the disposal, to put something at someone's disposal. You present it out there. And the Bible gives us three or four different subjects and objects of presenting.

Sometimes we present ourselves. Sometimes we are presented by someone else. So let's take a look at this idea of being presented specifically in the theological sense.

We saw last week that Felix presented some mules for transportation that Paul could use. Paul was going to be transported from point A to point B in Acts. They were placed at the disposal of the people who were going to transport Paul.

Let's look at it in the theological sense. First of all, we have right here in Romans 12. He says, present your bodies, present yourselves to God.

There are several passages where we are to present ourselves. For example, one that I'm sure

has sprung to your mind is 2 Timothy 2.15. 2 Timothy 2.15. Be diligent. The old King James says study.

Some of us, initially, when we saw that verse and learned it, we thought that's studying the Word of God. We study, we get down there and grind through word by word and verse by verse and so forth. Not that there's anything the matter with that, but study means to be diligent in earlier English.

And a good translation of that is be diligent to present yourselves as approved unto God. Be diligent to present yourselves approved to God. A workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, cutting a straight path, laying a straight course of bricks in the Word of Truth.

Not twisting, not deviating, not taking what is straight and making it crooked in the Word of God. Dealing with it straight. Be diligent to present yourselves as an approved workman.

This is a part of our call. This is a part of the exhortation that Paul gives us as believers. Paul has already in Romans 6 given us an encouragement that foreshadows this one in chapter 12 and echoes it.

And this is in chapter 6, verses 13, 16, and 19. This very same word from *parastesai* is used. He says, Do not present your members as weapons of unrighteousness to sin.

Don't place yourselves at the disposal. Don't be a weapon in the hands of sin. Don't place yourselves, don't place your members as instruments or weapons of unrighteousness.

We saw that word instruments when we went through chapter 6. It was the word used for a weapon, an implement to get something radical accomplished. But present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead. We are alive from the dead in the spiritual sense because of faith in Christ.

But he says present yourself to God. Live in the light of that positional truth. And notice that because it is an imperative, because it's an encouragement and an exhortation, it's something we have to decide to do.

It's not automatic. It's something we do. God doesn't grab us and make us weapons of righteousness.

We have to present ourselves as a weapon of righteousness. It's an option. It's a responsibility.

It's a duty and an opportunity for us to present ourselves to God as being alive from the dead and present our members as weapons of righteousness to God. Very same word. This occurs in verse 13, in verse 16, and in verse 19.

He says, I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. Just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for the purpose of holiness. This is the theme of Romans.

Here's how to be approved by God. Righteousness comes by faith. Present yourself to God.

Place yourself at His disposal. Now, this is not just yieldedness. Many times when this concept is taught, it has the idea of yield.

Yield yourself. Just flop. Let go of the reins.

Let go of the steering wheel. And let God take a hold of it. That's not what Paul has argued in this book, has he? That's not what he's saying in Romans 12.

He's going to give us the means by which we present ourselves to God. It isn't a matter of... They used to have this phrase going around, let go and let God. Put it on bumper stickers and things.

Let go and let God. And it sounds like, well, I just want to be the puppet. Let God pull the strings.

And that is to advocate our responsibility. He doesn't say give up and let God take control. There's this terrible misconception in Christianity that we are to let God take control and be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

And like He's going to sit down in the driver's seat and steer the car, steer our soul, make our decisions. He's going to impel us and control us. There is no such concept taught in the New Testament.

We are to have self-control. It's one of the fruits of the Spirit. Self-control.

That's mutually exclusive. You can't turn loose of the reins and still have self-control. We are to control ourselves enabled and empowered and guided by God the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

But we don't shut our eyes and say, okay, God, just use me. I'm just going to throw up my hands, just fill me, use me, just inhabit my body, compel me here and there and so forth. That's too easy.

It would be easy to just go along for the ride, to sit down in a chair and say, okay, God, take over. That's not what God calls us to. That doesn't exercise faith.

That's just giving up. That's just saying, I can't. I don't want to have any responsibility for this.

Just let God take responsibility. Whatever happens, it's God's. It's on Him.

He's in control. That's a false and a misleading concept. We are to grow.

We are to mature. We are to develop self-control. We are to make decisions and set priorities and think our way through problems.

And we don't let go and let God. We keep a hold and employ all of the resources that God has put at our disposal. And this idea of presenting doesn't mean to abandon thought and abandon responsibility.

It means that we are equipped. We are prepared. We have the knowledge, we have the tools, and we have the motivation to serve God, to be at His disposal.

If I was a military commander and I had an objective to accomplish, simple willingness would not be enough any more than if I went to the dentist. Somebody who was very willing and anxious for me to have good teeth, I wouldn't sit down and let them turn on the drill and start working on me. I want someone who's skilled, who's knowledgeable, who has experience, who is capable and equipped and knows exactly what they're doing and has placed themselves at my disposal in the sense that they are doing something that accomplishes the purpose that I need, that I have in mind.

I don't want very willing volunteers who don't know which end of a rifle to point. If I need to accomplish a military objective, I need someone who's been to school, who's got some experience, who has the motivation, who has the knowledge and the training and the will to employ those things to accomplish that goal. And that's what God is looking for.

He just doesn't want abject volunteers, hapless villagers who say, okay, God, just use me. You can't attack. You can't perform a function with no knowledge, with no training, with no skill, with no ability to persevere and hack through the opposition.

It takes growth. It takes preparation. It takes time.

And it takes willingness over a period of time. So we don't just surrender to preach. They have these calls.

Rededicate your life. Go down and just say, okay, I dedicate myself. I'm going to present myself as a living sacrifice.

That is manifestly not what Paul is talking about. Look at Romans 14. We will be here before too long.

Romans 14, verse 10. Why do you judge your brother? Paul is attacking the other end of this problem in the Christian church. Why are you judging one another? He's addressed the point, don't let yourself be judged by others.

Don't conform yourself to people's expectations. Don't give in to this pressure to do righteousness by works and approval by works and approval by pure jury. And now he's looking at the other

end.

You who are judging one another, the ones he talked to in chapter 2, he says, why do you judge your brother? Why do you show contempt for your brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Now, it's interesting because this word for stand before isn't just the word to stand, it's present. And it's in the middle voice.

We will all present ourselves at the judgment seat. And here's the surprise, and until I started doing detailed work in Romans, I didn't realize this, but there's a little bit of a textual deviation here in this verse. And the best evidence, and I am convinced that what is original in this verse is not the judgment seat of Christ, it's the judgment seat to Thou, the judgment seat of God.

T-O-U-T-H-E-O-U There are some texts, the majority text, which the King James is based on has a substitution there and it says the judgment seat of Christ. But the weight of the text is in favor of it saying the judgment seat of God and the context. Just look at the context here even in English.

Look at verse 11. It is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God. This is a presentation before God.

This is a confession that is made before God. Look at verse 12. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

And there is no textual problem there. We will give an account of ourselves to God. When are we going to give this account? We're going to give it at the judgment seat of God.

And really, we've sort of perpetuated, and I've been as guilty as anyone else because I did not do a detailed study of this verse until this week, but we have misspoke. It is the judgment seat of God at which we will stand after the rapture, not the judgment seat of Christ. And we will present ourselves at that judgment seat of God.

It's the same judgment that is spoken of in Romans 2 that we studied in detail. Why do you judge your brother? Why do you show contempt for your brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. We will all present ourselves at the judgment seat of God, the bema of God.

And that bema is not just a place of reward. It is also a place of discipline. It is a place where a person is measured and examined for approval or for disapproval, for vindication or for judgment.

We need to consider our life. We need to consider our thought pattern. We need to consider the way we're treating our fellow believers.

Are we guilty of putting that pressure on people? Are we guilty of trying to mold them into a particular path, of trying to sort of browbeat or pressure or put some kind of a mental form of encouragement on someone that is negative and that conforms them to our ideas of what

righteousness is and so forth? We all as believers have to be focused on what God thinks. Paul says this judging of believers by believers needs to stop. We're going to stand at the bema of God.

That's whose approval we need to be focusing on. That's the message of the book. But we will present ourselves.

We are to present ourselves now as instruments and weapons of righteousness. We are to present ourselves now as living sacrifices because we are going to present ourselves at the bema. We will come before God and say, Here I am.

These are the priorities I live by. This is the record that I left in human history. And we will receive our approval or our discipline from God at that judgment seat.

We see in 1 Corinthians 8.8 a related concept. Paul is talking about people who judge each other by whether they are willing to eat food that's been offered to idols or not. Whether they're willing to eat clean or unclean food.

And he says this has become an issue. People are judging each other by what they eat. The kind of lifestyle that they have in this regard.

He says in 1 Corinthians 8.7 There is not in everyone the knowledge that these idols are just pieces of rock. Maybe they used to be an idol worshiper and they still assign excessive amounts of importance to these idols. There is not in everyone that knowledge.

Some with consciousness of the idol until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol. And their conscience being weak is defiled. But food does not commend us to God.

Neither if we eat are we the better nor if we do not eat are we the worse. Beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. But in 1 Corinthians 8 when he says food does not commend us to God.

The word there that's translated commend is parastesai. It's present. Food doesn't present us to God.

Food doesn't... That's not the issue before God. When we are presented before God, when we present ourselves, it's not this idea we don't go to God and say, look God, I didn't eat any of that idol food. Or we don't look and say, look God how flexible, how knowledgeable I am.

I eat this idol food all the time. Look at how wonderful my lifestyle is. Making an issue out of what we do before God.

And saying, look, whatever else may be problems in my life, I haven't eaten that idol food. It's not an issue before God in terms of our presentation. When we present ourselves before God, this

food is not an issue.

What our policy is on this isn't an issue. So we know that this presentation before God isn't at the superficial level of simple action. This would be like presenting ourselves before God and saying, well, you know Lord, I was in church every Sunday.

Or I heard X number of hours of Bible teaching. Or I gave X number of dollars to ministries. Or I evangelized X number of people.

I handed out X number of tracts. We know when we stop and think about it that a simple action performed isn't the issue when we present ourselves to God. This was the big mistake Israel made, wasn't it? They offered the sacrifices, but their hearts were not right before God when they did it.

They went through the rituals. They performed the external actions. And God was not pleased.

God said, you're offering these sacrifices. You're conforming to the letter of the law. But your offerings and your sacrifices are a stench in my nose.

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in presenting ourselves to God, it's what's going in the heart that counts. What's going on in there? What are the thoughts and intents of the heart? That's where the Word of God pierces and judges.

So that's the issue. And we have to remember that. You hear, you can get tapes, you can get books.

Present your body a living sacrifice. Get hot in evangelism. Get hot in ministry.

Get hot in missions. Get hot in joining God in His work. Find out what God is up to activity-wise and jump in with both feet.

Get down there and wave your hands. Get down there and get involved. Get down there and cheer and so forth.

And you can see just by looking at this word present that our presentation of ourselves before God concentrates on we present the thoughts and intents of our heart. The wonderful thing is we have an opportunity to do that every waking moment of the day. We can present the priorities, the thoughts and intents, the motivations that we have.

We're presenting those to God every day. We don't have to join. We don't have to go.

We don't have to act because mundane actions, routine things that we do. Two people can be doing laundry and cleaning house. The thoughts and intents of the heart will determine whether that is meaningful to God and is glorifying to God or whether it's done with bitterness, whether it's done begrudgingly, whether it's done out of a desire to not be disapproved, to not be thought

unworthy by people.

Any action you want to name can be approved or disapproved based on the reason that it's done. We kill someone. We end their life.

Is that good or bad? Don't know. Have to have more information. Why was it done? Was this capital punishment for a capital crime? Or was it a murder to complete a robbery? We have to know why a life was ended before we know whether it was right or whether it was wrong.

This is one of the things, by the way, that needs to enter into people's contemplations of things like the abortion issue. It is not only the fact that a life is being ended, which it is, but why. And there is just as much guilt attached to the thought processes that go into the decisions that we make as the actions that we perform.

And for every overt sin that is committed, there is a thought process and a mental attitude sin behind it. And there's not enough attention given. Rather than going down and picketing an abortion clinic and physically trying to prevent people from going in, we as believers should be focusing on communicating the truth in love, on rehabilitating the souls of people so that their standards will reflect God's standards and the thoughts and intents of hearts will change.

Then all of our decisions are going to be good, including decisions in those areas. And the power and the way to change society and to change the norms and standards and the values that we have as a culture is to rehabilitate the soul through the Word of God, through the truth of God. And if you want a starting point, we're down there at the end trying to prevent the results when we ought to be, as believers, shining as lights in the world and offering people the power of God to change their hearts.

That's where the effect can be gained. Go up and alter things at the root, not out at the end of the branch. So we see this in Corinthians.

We see it in Romans 14. Now this is the concept of presenting ourselves. There's even a practical sense of this that you can see in Romans 16.

In Romans 16, Paul is talking about Phoebe, and he says, when she comes, present yourselves to her in a manner that's in accordance with what's fitting for the saints. He says in Romans 16, I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever business she has need of you. But that word translated assist means present.

It's the same word that's in Romans 12. Present yourselves to her. Place yourselves at her disposal in whatever business she has need of you, for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

And so here's a practical way that this presentation can affect itself. We're going to pause here and take our break, and when we come back, we're going to see other ways in which we are presented. We're going to see that Christ is going to present us.

We see that the Apostle Paul talks about presenting believers to God. And we're going to see that God Himself makes a presentation of us. We'll see that all when we come back.

Let's take a break.