

May 28, 2017 by Steve Brandon



Presenting Yourself

Romans 6:13-19

- 1. Report for Duty (verse 13).**
- 2. Love your Country (verses 14-15).**
- 3. Embrace your Slavery (verses 16-19).**

This is Memorial Day weekend. It's that time of year in which we as a nation honor those who have died while in uniformed service to our country. It's that time of year when we remember those who have given their lives for our freedom.

The history of this holiday traces back to the days of the Civil War, when some 500,000 Americans lost their lives. Those from the north and those from the south felt the burden to remember those who had fallen in war by decorating their graves with flowers. This is a practice that continues to this day.

And for many years, the holiday was simply called, "Decoration Day." It was a day to decorate the graves of fallen soldiers. It was first celebrated on May 30, 1868. The date was chosen specifically because there was no particular anniversary of a battle on that day. And, May 30 is a day in which the flowers are in bloom.

The last Monday of May officially became the holiday in 1971. It's a good holiday. It's an opportunity for us to remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. The number of Americans that have died in the service to our country is more than 1 million.

We can remember the numbers of those who have died in war. Like the 2,335 military personnel who died on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Like the 10,000 Allied forces who died on the beach of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944, more than 6,000 of them being American. Before the battle on Normandy was over, more than 100,000 U.S. ground forces were lost in that key battle that turned the tides of the war.^[1]

And with more than a million fatalities of war in our history, there are a million stories that could be told of how and where and when American troops gave up their lives in service to our country. Some, no doubt, were tragic--killed by friendly fire, caught in the crossfire, or wiped out by an enemy bomb.

Other deaths were heroic. Like Alexander Goode of New York and George Fox of Pennsylvania and Clark Poling of Ohio and John Washington of New Jersey. These men were chaplains on board an Army transport ship called the Dorchester during World War II. In the blackness of night on February 3, 1943, they were off the coast of Greenland, when a German U-boat fired torpedoes at the Dorchester. One of the torpedoes hit the middle of the ship and the Dorchester began to sink.

Pandemonium struck. But these men did what chaplains do: they were providing comfort and guidance and hope in a time of distress. They were distributing life jackets and directing the personnel to the evacuation points and onto the life boats. When the life jackets ran out, the four chaplains removed their own, and handed them to soldiers who didn't have them. The four chaplains went down with the ship. Those soldiers who survived told the story of their heroics.

After the war, their story was told far and wide. In 1948 a first-class 3-cent stamp was issued in their honor. Memorial Day is a day to remember men like these.^[2]

Or men like Leslie Sabo, who was valiant in war. On May 10, 1970, he was fighting in Cambodia during the Vietnam war. His platoon was caught in what is known today as "The Mother's Day Ambush," when the North Vietnamese surrounded the Americans and tried to overrun them. At one point a North Vietnamese soldier threw a grenade near a wounded American soldier lying in the open. Sabo ran out from his cover and covered the injured American, absorbing multiple wounds from the blast.

Later that night, Sabo found himself out in the open providing covering fire for a medical helicopter that was evacuating the injured. While reloading his ammunition, he was mortally wounded under heavy fire. But that didn't stop Leslie Sabo. He crawled forward toward enemy camp, pulled the pin of his own grenade, and threw it at the last possible moment toward the enemy bunker. The explosion silenced the enemy bunker and cost Sabo his life. He was finally acknowledged as a hero in 2012, when then President Obama awarded him the Medal of Honor, the highest military accolade.

These are but two stories of many that should be told this Memorial Day weekend. Now, my point this morning isn't to tell you stories of fallen war heroes. But I want for you to think a moment about their lives.

It's a long road from being a civilian to dying in battle for your country. At one point, every fallen soldier began his (or her) life as a civilian. And then the day came when they enlisted in the military. They went down to the recruiter's office. They filled out the paper work. They took the Oath of Enlistment.

"I, _____, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."

And with that oath, they presented themselves to the United States of America as a faithful soldier.

My question for you today is this: have you presented yourself as a soldier to the King of kings and Lord of lords? Have you taken the Oath of Allegiance to Jesus? "I pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ, And to God's kingdom for which he died—By God's grace, I will serve the Lord with all my heart for all my days. So help me God."

Our text this morning calls us to enlist in God's army in the war against sin. I invite you to open in your Bibles to Romans, chapter 6. Our text this morning begins in verse 13, and carries through to verse 19.

My message is entitled, "Presenting Yourself," because that's what Paul is calling us all to do. He is calling you to present yourselves to God. In fact, as I read the text, I want for you to listen for the phrase, "Present Yourself." Let's read.

Romans 6:13-19

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.

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

I trust that you can see how predominant this idea of "presenting yourselves" is in our passage. It comes in verse 13 (twice). It shows up in verse 15. It is also used in verse 19 (twice). Indeed, it is the predominant idea of the passage.

Here's my first point:

1. Report for Duty (verse 13).

I get this from verse 13, ...

Romans 6:13

Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

I trust that you can see the two simple commands in the text. We are not to "present ourselves" to sin (verse 13). We are to "present ourselves" to God (verse 13).

Before we talk about these commands, it would be helpful to remind ourselves of what we looked at last week. We saw the first two commands in all of Romans (in verses 11 and 12). These commands here in this verse are commands #3 and #4 in Romans.

Paul's delay in these things is instructive. He first talks of our sin. Then he talks of our salvation. And then, and only then, does he talk about our sanctification. I mentioned last week, and I will mention it again, because it is important Salvation comes first, and then sanctification.

Lest you think that the commands in verses 3 and 4 are somehow the way to get to right with God by cleaning up your act somehow, they aren't. Rather, they are the commands given to everyone who knows God. The first command given to a follower of Christ comes in verse 11, ...

Romans 6:11

Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We looked at this last week. My exhortation to you last week was to "Win the War of Your Mind." In other words, think rightly about who you are as a believer in Jesus. You are "dead to sin and alive to God." You are "dead to sin and alive to God." You are "dead to sin and alive to God." So regard yourselves.

In verse 12, Paul moves on from the mind to this will.

Romans 6:12

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

My exhortation from verse 12 was this: "Win the War of Your Will." That is, don't let your body control you. You control your body. You tell your body what to do. Don't let your body be in control.

And from verse 13, my exhortation is simply this: "Win the War with Your Members." That is, don't use the members of your body as

instruments for sin. Rather, use your members as instruments of righteousness.

Now, when we hear the word, "instruments" in verse 13, we can easily think of things like trombones and trumpets and violins and clarinets.

But, that's not what Paul is talking about here. The word translated "instruments" is usually translated, "weapons." Better is to think in terms of swords and arrows and clubs and spears. That's how the word is translated in all of the rest of the New Testament. And that's what Paul is talking about here. He's talking about a war that's taking place. He's not talking about a musical concert. He's talking about the war against sin.

You would do well to think about the members of your body as weapons of war in your fight against sin. And present your weapons to fight the fight of faith, to fight the fight of sanctification. That's why I have been using military illustrations. Because, Paul is talking here about a war taking place in your soul. It's a war against sin.

And Paul is simply calling us to

1. Report for Duty (verse 13).

Romans 6:13

Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

You stand before your enlisting officer, and you present yourself as a candidate for the military. And when you sign your enlistment papers, you have just signed away your life.

No longer will you choose where you live. The military will tell you where you live. No longer will you choose what you will do. The military will tell you what you will do.

Now, the military will equip you and prepare you for your duties. But, as a member of the military, you are under orders. And you may die in battle, fighting for your country, only to be remembered on Memorial Day.

Such is the life of a believer. Such is the life that God calls us to live. It's a life of military service to him! And I encourage you all, to Report for Duty (verse 13).

My second point comes from verses 14 and 15. Here's my exhortation:

2. Love your Country (verses 14-15).

One of the most iconic images of World War II is the raising of the flag atop Mount Suribachi in Iwo Jima on February 23, 1945. It evokes pride and sacrifice from the heart of many Americans. It's a good image for us to reflect upon this Memorial Day weekend.

Iwo Jima is a volcanic island, "located halfway between Japan and the Mariana Islands, where American long-range bombers were based." The island "was used by the Japanese as an early warning station, radioing warnings of incoming American bombers to the Japanese homeland." To capture this island would weaken the Japanese early warning system. "It was heavily fortified by the Japanese, and the invading Marines suffered high casualties."

However, at this moment, there was little resistance at the top of Mount Suribachi, because the Japanese were bunkered down in their cave bunkers as they were being bombarded with artillery by the Marines.

The flag was attached to a Japanese iron water pipe that the soldiers found on the top of the mount. "The raising of the national colors immediately caused a loud cheering reaction from the Marines, sailors, and coast guardsmen on the beach below and from the men on the ships near the beach. The loud noise made by the servicemen and blasts of the ship horns alerted the Japanese," who made futile attempts at resistance.

But, it took a month of battle before the island was fully secured by the Americans. It was the first of the Japanese homeland soil to be captured by the Americans, and signified a turning point in the war.

And today, when those in our country see the image, we are reminded of the willing sacrifice of our soldiers for our freedom. Such an image can easily stir within us a love for our country and a willingness to sacrifice for it.

Those who serve best in the military are often those who love their country the most. They love their country so much that they are willing to give their life serving their country, and if need be, to die for their country.

When a soldier proudly waves the American flag, there is little that will stand between that man and sacrifice.

John Kennedy said it well during his inaugural address (January 20, 1961): "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country." In other words, don't go into everything only looking for what you can get out of it, but go into your civil duty as a servant, looking to serve others.

And the metaphor of country-love works well here in verses 14-15.

Romans 6:14-15

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

When you come to Christ, what sort of master do you serve? Do you serve a tyrant? A despot? A dictator? Do you serve a king who commands you at his whim? Or, do you serve a gracious Lord, who draws you into loving service?

As one commentator said it this way, "Law is able to do many things: it commands, demands, rebukes, condemns, restrains. There is, however, one thing law can never do. It cannot save."^[3]

Romans 3:20

"by the works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight."

Likewise, I would also like to add that the law cannot sanctify. Oh, the law may bring some conformity to some standard of external obedience. But external conformity to a list of duties, is not Biblical sanctification. Biblical sanctification is the work that God does in the heart to bring his people into loving and willing conformity to his Son. In a few moments we will be looking at verse 17, which gets at the heart of sanctification.

Romans 6:17

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

There it is--obedience from the heart. And that's what I'm getting at with my second point, Love your Country (verses 14-15). In other words, know the ways of your master. Your master saves by grace. He doesn't demand submission by law and authority.

God brings submission through promise and through power. Note how verse 14 is a promise to all who believe in Christ, to all who have reported for duty.

Romans 6:14

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Note that Paul didn't say, "For sin [should not] no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace." It's not a "should not." It's a "will not." Paul is getting at the power of grace.

It's like what Jesus said in John 14:15. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." He didn't say, "if you love me, you [should] keep my commandments." Love to Jesus will express itself in obedience to his word. And when obedience is absent, it calls into question the existence of the love.

And when it comes to Romans 6:14, the same is true. "If you are under grace, ... sin will have no dominion over you." Sin can have a hey-day under the law. But it cannot flourish under grace.

See, when it comes to keeping the law, our hearts will easily seek shortcuts. Keeping the law, technically, but following the passions of your heart. These are the white lies that are told; they are technically true, but practically false. This is the justification for porn; it's not adultery. This is how people can hate with the heart; because they haven't physically murdered.

Jesus, of course, addressed all of those things in the Sermon on the Mount as he went deep into the heart. You can read his words in Matthew 5. But that's what grace does. It penetrates deep into the heart.

How easy is it to keep the letter of the law, but miss the spirit. But when grace is the motivation, it sinks deep, getting beyond the external law-keeping and going deep into genuine love and obedience to Christ.

The one who who is under grace does not ask, "What can God can do for me?" Rather, the one who is under grace asks, "What I can do for God?"

This is what it means to love grace. But there are those who don't love grace. There are those who don't understand grace. They ask the question that Paul raises in verse 15, ...

Romans 6:15

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

This is the second time that this objection has come. The first time comes in verse 1

Romans 6:1

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

In verse 2, Paul brings up the reality of our union with Christ. When you come to Christ, you are united with him. United in his life. United in his death. Which means that coming to Christ is dying to sin!

And we cannot sin.

Romans 6:2

... How can we who died to sin still live in it.

And here, beginning in verse 16, Paul gives his second answer. The first answer (in verse 2) was based upon our union with Christ. The second answer (in verses 16-19) is based upon our coming to Christ. Paul writes, ...

Romans 6:16-19

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

Rather than using the military illustration, Paul brings up the slavery illustration. Notice how many times he mentions slavery in these verses. Six times in four verses!

It's the dominating idea of Paul's answer to the question of verse 15, "Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?" He says, "By no means! Don't you know that you signed up for slavery?" Here's my point, ...

3. Embrace your Slavery (verses 16-19).

When we come to Christ, we come to him as his slave. Verse 16, ...

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

John MacArthur, in his book entitled, "Slave," writes this:

[Christians in the early centuries] had been radically redefined by the gospel. Whether slave or free in this life, they had all been set free from sin; Yet having been bought with a price, they had all become slaves of Christ. That is what it meant to be a Christian.

The New Testament reflects this perspective, commanding believers to submit to Christ completely, and not just as hired servants or spiritual employees--but as those who belong wholly to Him. We are told to obey Him without question and follow Him without complaint. Jesus Christ is our Master--a fact we acknowledge every time we call Him "Lord." We are His slaves, called to humbly and whole-heartedly obey and honor Him.

We don't hear about that concept much in churches today. In contemporary Christianity the language is anything but slave terminology. It is about success, health, wealth, prosperity, and the pursuit of happiness. We often hear that God loves people unconditionally and wants them to be all they want to be. He wants to fulfill every desire, hope, and dream. Personal ambition, personal fulfillment, personal gratification--these have all become part of the language of evangelical Christianity--and part of what it means to have a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ." Instead of teaching the New Testament gospel--where sinners are called to submit to Christ--the contemporary message is exactly the opposite: Jesus is here to fulfill all your wishes. Likening Him to a personal assistant or a personal trainer, many churchgoers speak of a personal Savior who is eager to do their bidding and help them in their quest for self-satisfaction or individual accomplishment.

The New Testament understanding of the believer's relationship to Christ could not be more opposite. He is the Master and Owner. We are His possession. He is the King, the Lord, and the Son of God. We are His subjects and His subordinates.

In a word, we are His slaves. [\[4\]](#)

This is exactly what Paul is getting at in verses 16-19. We are slaves of Christ. And if we are slaves, how then can we be slaves of sin? You cannot serve two masters. Either you serve the Lord of the universe, or you serve the Lord of your flesh. That's what Paul says in verse 16.

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Now, the difficulty in thinking about ourselves as slaves is that it conjures up images of brutality on those who have been subjected against their will. When we think of slavery, we often think of men, women, and children being taken against their will across the ocean to live a cruel life of servitude.

Now, certainly, some of that existed in the ancient world. Especially as nations were conquered and made to be subservient to their conquerors.

But, did you notice that verse 16 seems to hint at a willing slavery? That is, "...you have presented yourself" as a slave.

This is where Biblical slavery is different than we normally think of slavery. In the Old Testament law, provisions were made for those who loved the master. Exodus 21:5 says, "But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever" (Exodus 21:5-6).

In many ways, Biblical slavery can be compared to being a soldier. When you sign up, you lose control of your life. But you also gain a salary; you gain shelter; you gain education; you gain healthcare. You sign up for hardship--long hours, physical abuse at bootcamp, possibly even

death.

This is true of Biblical slavery. Being a slave to Christ, your ever need is provided for. Verse 19 is in many ways an illustration beyond our understanding. But, we may gain some insight. Verses 17 and 18 speak of obedience. The Romans to which Paul was speaking were obedient. They believed. And they were set free to be slaves to Christ. Do you believe?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 28, 2017 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] <http://www.ddaymuseum.co.uk/d-day/d-day-and-the-battle-of-normandy-your-questions-answered>

[2] <http://www.cnn.com/2013/02/03/opinion/greene-four-chaplains/>

[3] Hendriksen, p. 203

[4] MacArthur, John. Slave, pp. 13-15.