

Romans: The Good News According to Paul
"The Christian's Worship" (Part 1) Romans 12:1-2
 Heather Bible Fellowship (May 19, 2019) Pastor Larry Nelson

Introduction:

1. Please open your Bibles this morning to Romans Chapter 12.
2. Romans Chapter 12 marks a very distinct dividing line in the book of Romans.
 - a. While the first 11 chapters lay a foundation of doctrine chapters 12 through 16 are intensely practical in their application.
 - b. And so it should not surprise us that Paul begins this text with the word *"Therefore"* meaning *"In light of everything I have taught you so far this is how I want you to apply it in your daily lives."*

Romans 12:1-2

- 1 *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*
 - 2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*
3. For the Christian nothing is more important than our worship of God, and according to Scripture there are right and wrong ways to worship.

TRANS> Simply put these are two of the most practical and life-changing verses in the entire Bible because they set the standards of why and how Christians are to worship our God. So please follow along in your sermon outlines as we study:

- I. **The Reason for Worship** (Romans 12:1a)
- II. **The Essence of Worship** (Romans 12:1b)

And then next Sunday I plan is to cover Part 2:

- III. **The Transformation of Worship** (Romans 12:2a)
- IV. **The Discernment of Worship** (Romans 12:2b)

- I. **The Reason for Worship** (Romans 12:1a)

Romans 12:1 "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God ..."

- A. Many genuine Christians today live very frustrated lives because they are constantly being taught through books seminars Television and even at some churches that they are supposed to be getting something **more** from God.
- B. But we need to note that the Apostle Paul has just spent 11 chapters carefully explaining what we have already received from God through our salvation in Christ.

2 Peter 1:2-3

- 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;
 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

1. Through the written Word of God and the Holy Spirit's indwelling God has already given all Christians everything we need for salvation and sanctification.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

2. Please notice again Paul's use of the past tense in this verse where he says that God "... has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ
 3. So when Christians say and pray and sing that they want more of God they are not understanding this Biblical truth: Namely that we already have all of God that we are ever going to get.
 4. Sanctification in the Christian life is not about us getting **more** of God it is all about God getting more **control** of **us**!
 5. It is the practical working out what He has already worked in.
- C. So according to Scripture and particularly our *Romans 12:1-2* text the Christian life is not about us getting more from God but it is all about what we can give back to Him through our worship.
- D. It should be pointed out here that Paul is not using his authority as an Apostle to command Christians to obey him.
1. He says: "... I urge you, brethren ..."
 2. "Urge" comes from the Greek word <par-a-kal-e-o> which speaks of one who comes along side another in order to help and encourage.
 3. In *John 14:16* Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the <Par-a-kle-tos>
- E. So this text is all about why and how we are to worship God.
1. And just in case there would be any question Paul inserts the word "brethren" here: "I urge you brethren ..."
 2. It is only Christians who have been "born again" into God's forever family of repentant believers who can actually worship God.
 3. And this is born out by Paul's next phrase "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God ..."

4. Four times in *Romans 11:30-32* we are reminded about the “*mercy*” of God which moved Him to give us His love grace kindness forgiveness freedom justification glorification eternal life resurrection sonship the indwelling Holy Spirit faith peace hope and righteousness.
5. And so as Paul reminds us about God’s *mercies* that were abundantly bestowed upon us in the **past** he is now urging and encouraging every Christian to respond by worshiping God in the **present**.
6. *Hebrews 13:15* instructs all believers to:

Hebrews 13:15 “... continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

TRANS> Understanding the “Reason for Worship” I now want to spend the rest of this morning studying Point #2 in our Sermon Outline:

II. The Essence of Worship (*Romans 12:1b*)

- A. In other words what does true worship actually look like?

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- B. In *2 Corinthians 4:16* Paul describes the two-fold division of every person as being: the *outer man* and the *inner man*.
 1. The *outer man* speaks of our material side the physical body.
 2. While the *inner man* encompasses everything about us that is immaterial which the Bible defines in four synonymous words: *mind soul heart* and *spirit*.
 3. By God’s sovereign grace He has regenerated the *inner man* through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit but the *outer man* is still unredeemed and decaying.
 4. So here is an amazing thought to consider from our text:
 - a. God wants every Christian to worship Him as holy sacrifices even with these imperfect and unredeemed bodies.
- C. Paul is using the O.T. sacrificial system as a context for N.T. Christian worship.
 1. In the O.T. sinners would bring the unblemished animal to the temple priests who would kill and sacrifice it to the Lord the innocent dying on behalf of the guilty.
 2. But Jesus is the N.T. *Lamb of God* who was once-and-for-all offered up as the final and acceptable sacrifice to God.
 3. Therefore God will neither require nor accept any more dead sacrifices because the death of Christ was sufficient to pay the full price and penalty for our sins.

4. According to our text God requires every redeemed Christian to worship Him as “... a *living and holy sacrifice.*”

5. And this is done by the continual and deliberate presenting of our bodies to God.

D. Even though every Christian is redeemed and regenerated in the inner man as long as these bodies live we are infected with what the Bible calls “*the flesh*” in *Galatians 5:16-21*.

1. The “*flesh*” is that part of us which still wants to have its own way and not God’s way as it makes war against the Holy Spirit.

2. Now the “*flesh*” is mostly aroused by the 5 senses of our physical bodies through what we see touch hear taste and smell.

3. These physical senses arouse our “*flesh*” to have sinful imaginations which move even Christians to crave that which God has forbidden.

4. And this is why we must continually remember to offer our bodies to God as a “*living and holy sacrifice.*”

5. When it comes to our salvation repentance is all about recognizing the right of Jesus Christ to rule our hearts and lives as Lord and Master because we are His slaves.

6. Progressive sanctification it is all about the practical moment-by-moment outworking and recognition of Jesus’ right to rule and reign over every aspect of our lives.

7. Truly Jesus is our loving Lord and Master but He is still Lord and Master which gives Him absolute right over our lives to do with us as He pleases for our good and His glory.

E. As Paul winds down the last verses of *1 Thessalonians* he prayed:

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. So what does it actually look like to present our “*bodies a living and holy sacrifice,*” which is “*acceptable to God*”?

2. Even a child can understand the simplicity of what this means.

a. Lord I give You my hands to touch and hold that which honors and pleases You.

b. Lord I give You my eyes to only look at that which honors and pleases You.

c. Lord I give You my feet to only go to those places that will honor and please You.

d. Lord I give You my ears to only listen to that which honors and pleases You.

e. Lord I give You my voice to speak in ways that honor and please You.

- f. Lord I give You my mind to think about that which honors and pleases You.
- g. Lord I give You my affections to only love that which honors and pleases You. and
- h. Lord I give You my possessions to honor and please You.

F. One of the differences between a living and a dead sacrifice is that the animal only had to die once but as living sacrifices Paul declared in *1 Corinthians 15:31* "I die daily."

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

1. Jesus' life and death were holy sacrifices to God on our behalf.
2. So genuine repentance which leads us to salvation is God calling us to die to our own desires and to live for Him as "... a living and holy sacrifice ..."

Romans 6:12-13

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.

3. Dear ones this is as practical as it gets.
 4. Our daily battle with sin our will vs. God's will is both won and lost in the mind.
 5. And this is why as slaves of Christ we must be constant and deliberate in presenting the members of our body and mind over to God as a "living and holy sacrifice."
- G. Contrary to the false teachings of many today there has never been any experience (other than death) that will ever cure our fleshly sin problem – which craves to have our way instead of God's.
1. Over the years I have counseled many desperate and frustrated souls who say that they have spoken in tongues they have been prophesied over they have been slain in the spirit they have sought miraculous healing and yet they still have no joy in life or victory over sin.
 2. Sadly the churches and television celebrities who teach these things not only offer false hope but they actually endanger the souls of those who blindly follow them.
 3. We need to remember that many of the demonic religions which existed before Christianity actually practiced these same counterfeit experiences.
 4. Jesus was falsely accused of doing miracles by the power of Satan but many of those who promote these bazaar experiences today are crediting the Holy Spirit with that which is actually coming from of the devil.

5. And therefore discerning Christians should not walk but **run** to the nearest exit and have nothing to do with them!!
- H. Experiencing a God-honoring holy life as a *“living sacrifice”* in these cursed bodies can be compared to dragging a dead bus with square wheels through wet concrete.
1. And no charismatic experience has the power to help anyone have victory over sin and the flesh.

Romans 8:12-13

12 *So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--*
 13 *for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

- I. There is no simple pathway to sanctification and victory over sin and the flesh.
1. So please consider:

Ephesians 5:15-18

15 *Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,*
 16 *making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*
 17 *So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*
 18 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,*

2. The word *“filled”* as it is used here has nothing to do with volume as in the filling up of your gas tank.
 3. It means to *“control.”*
 4. That is why Paul uses drunkenness to illustrate his point.
 5. Just as a drunkard is totally controlled by his wine so the Christian is to deliberately give over his life to the moment-by-moment *“control”* of the Holy Spirit.
 6. Even though we do not have this verb tense in English the Greek of this text would read: *“I command you to be being constantly controlled by the Holy Spirit.”*
 - a. So thinking back to the beginning of this sermon the Christian never gets more of God’s Holy Spirit.
 - b. In point of fact He gets more-and-more of us as we deliberately give ourselves over to the Holy Spirit’s moment-by-moment control of our lives.
 - c. This is what it means to *“... present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice ...”* where throughout the day we are giving God the right to control and rule over our hands and feet and eyes and voices and ears and affections and minds.
- J. The word *“holy”* that Paul uses here in our *Romans 12:1* text is *<hagios>* which has the literal meaning of something that has been set apart for a special purpose.

1. The animal sacrifices of the O.T. had to be without any spot or blemish or imperfection.
2. Otherwise God would not accept either the offering or the person who offered it.
3. Listen to God's rebuke which was given to Israel through the Prophet Malachi.

Malachi 1:8 But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts.

4. Presenting ourselves to God as a "living and holy sacrifice" means that we must give Him our best not the leftovers.

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

5. Giving our best to God is what Paul calls our "... spiritual service of worship."
6. And please note that when this is done by either the obedient faith of a Christian child or a mature adult Paul says that this "living and holy sacrifice" is "acceptable to God"
7. Remember this living sacrifice begins with right thinking about God and His sovereign right to rule and reign over us.

K. Paul concludes *Romans 12:1* by calling this living and holy sacrifice as being our: "... spiritual service of worship."

1. The Greek word that he uses here for "spiritual" is <lo-gi-kos> from which we get the English word "logical" or as the King James translates it: "reasonable."
2. In other words in light of the measureless "mercies" of God which every Christian has already received it is only "reasonable" or "logical" that we devote our minds and bodies to being a "living and holy sacrifice" to Him because He deserves nothing less than our best.
3. And when we do God calls this Holy Spirit empowered "service" "worship."
4. The worship that pleases God has nothing to do with long liturgical prayers candles priestly robes or magnificent church buildings.
5. The worship that pleases God comes from a right understanding of His Word that is reflected in our sincere obedience devotion and praise.
6. Christian worship is all about seeking to honor God in our minds and bodies both in public and in private especially when we get bumped by the unforeseen problems and difficulties of life.
 - a. When Job was notified that his wealth was gone and his children had all died the Bible says:

Job 1:20-22

20 Job ... fell to the ground and worshiped. (saying)
 21 ... The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.
 Blessed be the name of the LORD."
 22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

- b. Whenever we get bumped by circumstance or people problems whatever is on the inside sloshes to the outside.
- c. A few years ago as we were getting ready to leave for church I noticed a nail sticking out of my back tire.
- d. As I looked more closely there wasn't one nail but 4!
- e. I thought "No big deal nails happen" and because the tire was still holding air we drove to church and because of my busy schedule I had to keep driving on it for the next 3 days.
- f. Finally I drove to Costco to get it fixed.
- g. The guy who waited on me was named William and as he looked at my hat he said, *"Pastor I've been doing this job forever and I have never seen anything like this 4 nails all in the space of a quarter. I am sorry to have to tell you this but somebody deliberately did this to you! This is vandalism!"*
- h. So I said *"William when a man stands for God and His Word eventually he is going to pick up some of God's enemies and some of them have nails and therefore we should not be surprised when sinners act like sinners."*
- i. *"Everything I own belongs to God and somebody has taken a nail-gun to one of His tires. NOT SMART!!"*
- j. Then William looked at me kind of funny and said: *"I have some more bad news. since there is more than one hole and the holes are not at least 10 inches apart the tire has to be trashed and replaced."*
- k. Then I said *"I actually feel sorry for that poor guy. Not only did he destroy God's tire but He now has stolen a couple hundred dollars of God's money NOT SMART!"*
- l. When I came back later to pick up my car William was all smiles as he said, *"I just talked with the boss Have a nice day and there will be no charge for the tire!"*
- m. SWEET! Isn't that just like our Heavenly Father to do something like this for one of His kids?
- n. When the difficulties of life bump us our sovereign God calls us to worship Him even if we have to pay for the tire.

Romans 12:1-2

- 1 *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*
- 2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Conclusion:

1. So this morning we have studied **The Reason for Worship** and **The Essence of Worship**.
2. Next Sunday I hope to complete this message as we move on to *Romans 12:2*.

III. The Transformation of Worship (Romans 12:2a) and**IV. The Discernment of Worship** (Romans 12:2b)

3. But until then I would like all of you to meditate in this *Romans 12:1-2* text and also in:

Hebrews 13:15-16

- 15 *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*
- 16 *And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*
4. Even as we ask: *“Lord what should this look like in my life today?”*
5. Let’s pray together