

## Part 2 of the Series: Fundamentals of the Transforming Ability of the Gospel: Related to Christian Conduct

**Sermon Title: A Life of Worship Based on the Mercies of God**

**Sermon Text: Romans 12:1-2**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to live in light of the mercies of God.**

**Sermon Purpose: There are 4 steps of true life transforming worship.**

**Introduction:** Paul has just closed out Romans 1-11, with a Hymn of Praise related to God's work in salvation history. Paul now wants to connect sound doctrine, with sound Christian conduct. We currently live in an age where what it means to be a Christian, no longer is informed by the Scriptures. We live in a time where what you say you are carries more weight than who you are, what you are, and how you live. Yet churches are filled with people who profess a creed they don't reflect daily.

This is a result of the drive through Christian perspective, easy in and out believeism, and grace ATM card mentalities. Sin is no longer sin, God is no longer God, holiness is out of fashion, and church membership and participation is optional, not mandatory. This is a result of churches filled with people who have not been born again, homes that no longer have a priest, pastor, or protector who leads their flock in the way of the Lord. This is a result of false, fake, faithless church leaders who serve their congregation half baked meals of God's Word, have your way Christian worldview, quick in and out discipleship and evangelism programs, drive through spirituality, and powerless self-service counseling.

“David Livingstone, the renowned and noble missionary to Africa wrote in his journal,

People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward of healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and bright hope of glorious destiny hereafter?

...Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering or danger now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us.” [John MacArthur, “The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 9-16, Moody Press, Chicago, 1994, pp.146-147.]

The key to spiritual victory and true happiness is not in trying to get all we can from God but in giving all that we are and have to God. The key to a productive and satisfying Christian life is not in getting more but in giving all. This is the essence of true worship. The supreme act of worship is to offer ourselves totally and continually to the Lord as a living sacrifice.

**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,

**Colossians 2: 3** in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge....**10** and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

**2 Peter 1: 3** as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

**1 John 2: 27** But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

- I. In true worship the soul must be sacrificed to God. V.1a
- II. In true worship the body must be sacrificed to God. V.1b
- III. In true worship the mind must be sacrificed to God. V.2a
- IV. In true worship the will must be sacrificed to God. V.2b

## I. In true worship the soul must be sacrificed to God. V.1a

The English verb (exhort) captures well the Greek nuance of the Greek parakaleo. Its semantic range lies somewhere between “request” and a “command”: an exhortation of Apostolic authority comes with it. What Paul calls for in v.1 and, by extension in all of 12:2-15:13- is more (and no less) than the appropriate and expected response to God’s mercy as true believers have experienced it. We experience God’s mercies as a power that exerts a total and all-encompassing claim upon us: grace now “reigns” over us (5:21).

- a. Therefore, as a result of the mercies of God.
- b. Therefore, as an outcome of the mercies of God.
- c. Therefore, as an appreciation for the mercies of God.

The soul is the inner, invisible part of a man that is the very essence of his being. Therefore, until a man’s soul belongs to God, nothing else he offers matters or has any spiritual significance.

**Romans 8: 8** So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

**Matthew 16: 26** For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

**2 Corinthians 8: 5** And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

## II. In true worship the body must be sacrificed to God. V.1b

“Body” can refer to the physical body, and is used in a metaphorical sense with sacrifices made in the Old Testament. But Paul is referring to a sacrifice of the entire person, with special emphasis on our interaction with the world, sin, Satan, and sons of disobedience. He is making a special point to emphasize that the sacrifice we are called to make requires a dedication of service to God in this harsh and often enticing life of this world. The verb present means “to offer up as a sacrifice.” There are 3 characteristics of the sacrifice we offer.

A. It is a living sacrifice offered to God.

The sacrifice is a living one on its way to death. One that does not die physically as it is offered but goes on living and therefore continues its sacrifice until the person who is offered dies. It is modeled in the Old Testament by the priest placing an offering on the altar, and generally has the idea of surrendering or yielding up. Therefore as a “holy priesthood” **1 Peter 2: 5** you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Christians are exhorted to perform what is basically a priestly act of worship.

The body is still the center of sinful desires, emotional depression, and spiritual doubts. **1 Corinthians 9: 27** But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

**Galatians 5: 24** And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

**2 Corinthians 12: 7** And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

It is helpful to understand that dualistic Greek philosophy still dominated the Roman world in New Testament times. This pagan ideology considered the spirit, or soul, to be inherently good and the body to be inherently evil. Therefore, what is done in the body does not matter cause it will die anyway.

**1 Thessalonians 5: 23** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 6: 11-13** And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. **12** All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. **13** Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Even now, our unredeemed bodies can be and should be made slaves to the power of our redeemed souls. (**Romans 6:12-14, 16-19, 22**)

B. It is a **holy** sacrifice offered to God.

“Holy” is a regular description of sacrifices; it implies here that the offering of ourselves “set apart” from the profane, sin, and death, unto God in dedicated service. Paul admonishes us by God’s mercies and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment, to offer our imperfect but useful bodies as living and holy sacrifice. (**Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 22:2ff**)

**1 Samuel 15: 22** So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

**2 Samuel 12: 13** So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

C. It is a acceptable sacrifice offered to God.

**Psalms 24: 4** He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.

**Malachi 1: 8** And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the Lord of hosts.

Chrysostom comments: “And how is the body, it may be said to become a sacrifice? Let the eye look on no evil thing, and it hath become a sacrifice; let the tongue speak nothing filthy, and it hath become an offering; let thine hand do no lawless deed, and it hath become a whole burnt offering.” [The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistle of Romans, Douglas J. Moo, p. 754]

D. It is a **reasonable** sacrifice to offer to God.

### III. In true worship the **mind** must be sacrificed to God. V.2a

We can only present our bodies to the Lord as genuinely holy and acceptable sacrifices only if we “do not conform to this age” but are transformed by the renewing of the mind.

A. The negative point of practice is **non conforming**.

It is in the mind that our new nature and our old humanness are intermixed. It is in the mind that we make choices as to whether we will express our new nature in holiness or allow our fleshly humanness to act in unholiness.

Paul’s gentle but firm command is that we are not allowed to be conformed to this world. We are not to masquerade as a worldly person for any reason. J. B. Phillips translates this phrase as “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.”

New Testament scholar Kenneth Wurst paraphrased this clause: “Stop assuming an outward expression which is patterned after this world, an expression which does not come from nor is representative of what you are in your inner being as a regenerated child of God.” [Loreet’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955m 1:206-7.]

The verb *suschematizo* is passive and imperative, the passive indicating the conformation is something we allow to be done to us, the imperative indicating a command, not a suggestion.

(**1 John 2:15-16; 2 Corinthians 10:1-5; Colossians 3:16-17**)

The “world”, or “age” is the sin-dominated, death producing realm in which all people, included in Adam’s fall, naturally belong. It corresponds to the German Zeitgeist (the spirit of the age) referring to “that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and actually define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being the moral or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale.” [G.C. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament E Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973, pp. 217-18.]

Too often we want to enjoy the world’s entertainment, the world’s fashions, the world’s vocabulary, the world’s music, and the many worldly attitudes – even when those things clearly do not conform to the standards of God’s Word. This sort of living is totally unacceptable to God. (**1 John 5:19**)

B. The positive point of practice is **transforming**.

The Greek verb (metamorphoo) provides the idea change in outward appearance and is a term we get the English metamorphosis. Matthew used it in (Matthew 17:2) in the transfiguration of Christ. This is a passive imperative, positively, we are commanded to allow ourselves to be changed outwardly into conformity to our redeemed inner nature. (Ephesians 5:18)

**2 Corinthians 3: 18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

C. The successful point of practice is **renewing** of the mind.

The Holy Spirit achieves this transformation by renewing the mind. The outward transformation is effected by an inner transformation in the mind, and in the Spirit’s means of changing our minds in the Word of God. (**Colossians 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**)

**Psalm 119: 11** Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!

**Colossians 1: 28-29** Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. **29** To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

**Colossians 3: 10** and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

#### IV. In true worship the **will** must be sacrificed to God. V.2b

Offering your will to God, while allowing the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to conform our wills to the will of God, so that we then approve of and live out the will of God. This is the end result. Therefore, when a true believer’s mind is transformed, their thinking ability, moral reasoning, and spiritual understanding are able to properly assess everything, and to accept only what conforms to the will of God.

A. The will of God is good.

B. The will of God is acceptable.

C. The will of God is perfect.