

What is True Worship?

Romans 12:1~2

What does it mean to “*Worship*” the Lord? Well, in our day, the answer you get may vary, depending on who you ask. Over the years, I have heard various different opinions as to what it is, and what it is not. The most common answers I get, all have to do with the style of Sunday “*worship*” services. Differences ranging from the style of music that is sang, whether it be traditional hymns, or the contemporary style. Differences in the style of dress, to issues like tithing, the structure of the service, and on and on.

Well, tonight I want to suggest something to you, that may come as a shock... None of those things constitute, true spiritual worship of God. All those things are important, they are needful and do matter, for they structure the service during our time together. But it does not constitute true worship. Matter of fact, (I may be seen as “radical”)...I do not even refer to our time together on Sundays and Wednesdays as “*Worship Services*.” I do not see it so much as that we come together to “*Worship the Lord*,” but rather, we come together to learn more about the “*God we worship*.” And as far as the style of music we sing, or the order of service, and things like that, those are just preferences. According to the scripture, the true worship of God is not so much what we do in here, as much as it is what we do out there. If our worship is merely defined by what we do when we come together here, then it’s vain, and worse...hypocrisy.

Tonight, I want you to look with me if you will, to what I believe to be, the most accurate and clearest definitions, of what it means to “*Worship God*.” What we see happening here, is the establishment of “*True Spiritual Worship*.” Paul is establishing the “*pattern of worship*” for those who follow Christ. He actually says here, that by following the pattern set forth here, we will be setting the example to the rest of the world, what God expects of every man, and every woman.

¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ²And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:1 marks a transitional point in this letter... It is here that Paul moves from the “***Theological***” aspects of the “*Gospel of Christ*,” to the “***Practical***” aspects of the gospel. This epistle could be separated into two parts, Romans 1~11 Paul explains the Theological implications of the gospel, the message of Christ, while 12~16 Paul makes Practical application. Going from “*knowing*” what the teachings of the gospel, to the “*doing*” of the gospel. Up to this point, Paul has been explaining or revealing God’s plan of redemption for all of mankind. Explaining what righteousness is, and what it is not. The purpose of the Law, and the role it plays in the message of Christ. How that man is totally depraved, spiritually dead. Paul has explained how God uses the Law to render men guilty before God, then points them to Christ as the only remedy. Paul has explained Israel’s, role and purpose in bringing all of this to pass, making God’s plan of salvation possible to all men. Having explained everything that God has DONE...he now moves to what men must DO given that knowledge...

Paul writes using the metaphoric language of “*Temple Worship*.” Temple worship was a big part of Jewish life. It had been since the days of Moses, immediately after giving the Law on Mt. Sinai, God instructed Moses to build a tabernacle, a place of worship. The tabernacle became a house of worship, where the Israelites would offer up sacrifices according to the conditions set forth in God’s Law. And this continued throughout their wandering in the wilderness, until they finally reached the Promised Land, where God instructed Solomon to build a Temple. From the days of Moses throughout every generation, to the days that Paul is writing this letter, animal sacrifices were made to God. The purpose of animal sacrifices was that the blood of these animals served as an atonement for the sins.

Having said that, Paul has declared that all those animal sacrifices were a “shadow” of the offering of Christ. Paul declares that through the offering up the body of Jesus, for man’s sin, that there is no longer a need for the sacrificing of animals. The shadow has faded away, and the reality has come. Paul declares that Jesus was the precious Lamb of God, who was offered up on the altar of the cross, for us, to make atonement for our sin! It’s really interesting when you think about it, throughout all those generations, from Moses to the Paul’s generation, unbeknown to Israel, they had been “preaching” the gospel of Christ. Every time they would slaughter and offer up an animal sacrifice, they were portraying the ultimate sacrifice, that of the offering up of Jesus Christ on the cross...once and for all, for the sins of the world! I love the way the writer of Hebrews puts it...

(He. 10) ¹⁰By the which will we are sanctified **through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** ¹¹And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: ¹²But this man, after **he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever**, sat down on the right hand of God..... ¹⁴For **by one offering he hath perfected for ever** them that are sanctified.

Christ was the “fulfillment” of the Law! For thousands of years, Israel had been “preaching” the crucifixion of Jesus Christ for man’s sin...and didn’t even know it! All those blood sacrifices, were a “foreshadow” of the ultimate blood sacrifice...the precious blood of Jesus...

It is here in Romans 12:1~2...that Paul explains the “*New Pattern of Worship*” for those who follow Christ, in contrast of the “*Old Pattern of Worship*” that Israel had been doing for centuries! These two verses mark a major, major transition in the way that men would worship God, from Paul’s day forward. Again, what we see happening here is the establishment of “*true spiritual worship*.” Paul is establishing the “*pattern of worship*” by those who follow Christ, the *worship* of the church. Paul declares that as followers of Christ, we are to set forth the example, showing the world what the “*true worship of God*” is.

Paul says...¹*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

The “*call*” is to “*present our bodies*” **as a living sacrifice** to God... Herein lies the very essence of the Christian faith, the heart of what it means to live the Christian life. Look very closely, the call of God **is not** that we “**LIVE OUR LIVES FOR HIM...**” But rather **WE SACRIFICE OUR LIVES** for Him. The call is to die to SELF...to place SELF on the altar, rendering our bodies unto God as a place for Him to dwell, as a vessel to carry out His Will and His purposes in our life!

The contrast here is to that of the empty, meaningless worship of Israel, in that of offering up the “*bodies of dead animals*,” to true worship, the offering up of “*Our Bodies*” to God...*by the offering up of ones life* as an act of worship.

And I want you to notice something here...that he calls us to do this, **based on the mercies of God.** ¹*I beseech you therefore, brethren, **by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...*** It’s important we don’t miss this, because it’s important that we fulfill this call on our life, with the right motives! Paul says, I call you to “*lay down your lives to God*” based on the “***the mercies of God.***” (No doubt, Paul has the “Cross” on his mind as he is writing this!) I ask you to do this, on the basis of knowing what God has done for you. The point is, not out of obligation, not out of guilt, or commandment... But rather out of love and appreciation to God for what He has done! ¹*I beseech you therefore, brethren, **by the mercies of God... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...***

Again, I want to point out, that the call of the gospel is not that we would “*live better*,” “*live to a certain set of rules*,” “*be faithful to keep certain religious rites*,” but rather, out of “*Love and gratitude*” for what God has done for us...we’d respond by offering to Him...over very lives! That we would present “*our bodies*” as “**an offering**” to God, to be used for His purposes! Offering to God the strength in these hands, the strength that are in these feet, the sight that is in these eyes, the hearing that is in these ears, the

speaking ability of the mouth and tongue, all the various faculties of our bodies, to be used for His purposes!

Now...that is almost an *unimaginable request* in the church age we are in today... That's a strange gospel to many today; they're not hearing that. Many are hearing a false gospel that degrades the Grace of God, to something that teaches men can live how they want, and God will overlook it. A gospel that requires nothing of man. I'll agree, as far as attaining salvation on my own, I realize I never could, it is impossible. Christ did everything necessary for my salvation. But there is one thing I must DO...and that is to receive it, by "*Surrendering my life*" to Him!

As I said, this is almost an *unimaginable request* in the church in the time we are in! But even so, that is what Paul is calling for us to do. And to make sure that no one suggest that he is asking "*too much*" of us, Paul adds...*which is your reasonable service*...The word reasonable can be translated two ways, according which translation you have. *The actual Greek rendering is* $\forall\lambda\omicron\gamma-\iota\kappa-\omicron\sigma\epsilon\forall$ from which we get our word "*logical*." Paul is saying, when you consider what God has done for us, (by the mercies of God), in offering up His Son for us, knowing that Christ laid down His life for us...the only "*rational*" response, the only "*logical*" response is to lay down our life for Him. **Wouldn't that simply be the "Logical" response?** I mean, doesn't that just make sense? Paul says...Knowing that Christ died for you...isn't only logical to live for Him!

The point here is, that what Paul is "*Calling*" us to do, is not some "*Extreme Measure of Service*," reserved only for certain ones or the elite. This is not something that should be considered "*too difficult*" or "*too demanding*." But rather, as Paul states, it is the "*least*" we can do. The way it is written, doesn't even consider whether or not one will be obedient to it, *it assumes* that ALL who know this, will respond in this manner. That knowing what Christ did for us, the only logical, rational response would be to *lay down ones life in service to Him*.

...which is *your reasonable service*... In can also be translated "***your spiritual service***" or *worship*. Paul declares, that to do this is simply the "*True Spiritual Worship of God*." To live our lives for our self, then come in to offer God our service on Sundays wouldn't be true worship would it? To offer God our lives is simply the way its supposed to be, it's only logical, that's what worshiping God is all about.

So first we see, that the call to "*offer our bodies a living sacrifice*" is to be done with the "*Right Motive*," solely out of love for God and what He has done. Then secondly, Paul speaks to the "*Manner*" in which we are to offer our bodies... "***holy, acceptable unto God***, which is *your reasonable service*." The best definition of "*holy*" is that of "*Separated...or Set aside for*." To consider something holy, is for the object to be set aside solely for the purpose or use of God...NOTHING ELSE.

Look at what he goes on to say...¹*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service...*

²***And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.***

²**And be not conformed to this world**...Here, the context **is not** that of being "*Worldly minded*." It's important we understand this. Paul **is not** speaking here, of living *worldly lives*. That was established by presenting our bodies as "*Holy, acceptable*." It's crucial to the understanding of this passage, that we correctly understand what "***world***" he's referring too here. The "***world***" that he speaks of here is not the word used to describe the allurements of this world to that of the flesh. The word Paul uses here for *world* is *Aion*...and it refers to "*an age*," a "*period of time*." Specifically (Jewish) a *Messianic period*. The "*world*" that refers to worldly living, is ***Kosmos***.

(1John 2) ¹⁵*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes,*

and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the **world**.¹⁷ And the **world** passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abides forever.

Kosmos...order, arrangement, ornament... adornment. It refers to its attraction, its beauty, its allure to the FLESH (man's *sinful nature*.) To say that someone is "**walking in the flesh**" is to say that person is living to lust and desires of the sinful nature. It describes someone who lives their life to please themselves, rather than God. Living to self-will, self-ways, living in pursuit of the things of this world, following the ways of this world, etc. But that is not the "**world**" that Paul is referring to here when he says...² **And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**...

John used the word **Kosmos**, whereas Paul uses **Aion** (world)...and it refers to "*an age, a "period of time."* Specifically (Jewish) a Messianic period. Given that, a better translation might be...

(Vs 2)² And be not conformed to "**this age**:"

Given the context, it might be stated....."*and do not pattern yourselves after this generation.*"

Listen very closely...I want to suggest to you, that by "**world**," Paul is referring to "**Israel**"...

Rather than exhorting us not to be conformed to the "**Ways of this World**," I am persuaded that Paul is referring to the "**Ways of Israel**."

"**Do not pattern your worship after the worship of Israel**"... Its important for the follower of Christ not to pattern their worship after Israel, simply for the fact, even though Israel had a "*form of righteousness*," a "*form of worship*," by their deeds in the law, it still was not true spiritual worship! Remember what Paul told us in Romans 10:1~3 Israel is worshiped God in ignorance. Knowing that, do not pattern yourselves after them. The followers of Christ, the CHURCH will set the standard of what true spiritual worship is! Rather than offering to God the "*Empty, useless bodies of dead animals*"...that we would offer to God, "*Our living bodies*"...as an offering to Him a place for Him to dwell, a place to carry out His will and ways in this world.

Which, as Paul says, "*sets the example to the rest of the world*" what God requires of all men!
.....*that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

The word "**Prove**" means to show what is "*authentic*," to manifest the "*real stuff*." Beloved, we are to be "*examples*" of what the *true worship* of God is... Paul says we do this by laying aside our self will, self desires, and "*presenting our bodies*" to God as a "*living sacrifice*." In doing so, we *make clear*; or we *show the true standard* of what God expects of all men!

I'm convinced that's what the Cross is all about. To follow Christ means to "*take up a cross*," and live *crucified lives*, putting to death the desires and lust of the flesh, self... thus "*Setting the pattern*" for others to know God's standard of righteousness. Righteous living is not attained in keeping the Law, living morally clean or such...but in carrying the cross.

I want to close, by looking at the final words Paul says here, speaking of the "**Perfect**" will of God...
...*that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

The word "**Perfect**" signifies "*having reached its end*," "*finished or complete*." The purpose of the gospel is to bring people to a "*True spiritual worship of God*." When mankind, (*as a result of hearing the gospel*,) repents of his sin, turning from self will, laying it down on the altar as a sacrifice to God, to follow the will of God for his life, then and only then has that man been reconciled back to God. The gospel has reached its desired end, the gospel has finished its course, it has accomplished what God set it out to do... That of restoring fallen man back to where he belongs...a worshiper of the one, true living God.