

## Authentic Worship

### pt. 3

Biblical worship, worship in spirit and truth is not an assignment but a lifestyle.

If you recall last week's lesson when the nation of Israel was about to enter the Promised Land God gave them an invitation to worship him - that was their primary purpose. Turn again for review to Ex.24. In vs.1 Moses, Nadab, Abihu and 70 elders are called to worship God. Moses then recounts the Word of the Lord to the people who issue a response – 3. Moses then wrote it all down and built an altar where burnt and peace offerings were presented to the Lord. These offerings had nothing to do with atonement or forgiveness. They were a means to consecrate themselves to the Lord and give him thanks.

All of this was worship as Moses and the people entered into a covenant with God and gave both themselves and their gifts to the Lord. The implication is that worship is a lifestyle not just a one hour a week experience.

While we don't build altars and burn sacrifices we do worship God with our sacrifices. Note Heb.13:15-16. Heb.13:15 *Let us continually...* How often is continually? Always, ongoing, habitually. Praise is not just in fair weather, but also in every circumstance. This praise is called a "sacrifice". This word is used throughout Hebrews to express the death of Christ for us (13:10-12; 10:11-14; 7:26-27) – what he gives to the Father to pay for our sin. Our praises like the Son's death are our gifts to the Father for what he has done in our lives.

This worship of praise is continual and therefore worship is a lifestyle.

But the sacrifice is not only in word but also in deed – doing good and sharing (16). Worship involves action that honors God. God doesn't want just lip service. He wants us to put shoes to our words. He wants us to walk our talk.

Peter states it this way in 1 Pet.2:5 *you also as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a royal priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ.* We are all priests in the spiritual house God is building therefore when we pray, intercede, and give to others we act as priests offering spiritual sacrifices which are acts of worship. Our priesthood is not confined to a building or a time but is daily and ongoing. Therefore worship is a lifestyle.

Scotty Smith, former pastor at Christ Community Church in Franklin, TN in his book The Reign of Grace: Worship is God's love language – the main dialect he wants us to master, the tongue in which he would have us become most fluent. There is nothing in which he finds greater delight than true worship. And there is nothing to which God responds with greater distain than false worship. (pg. 173)

False worship is not just the worship of idols but also includes worship with an impure or hard heart. Recall the warning from Ps. 95:8-11 – *do not harden your hearts...* That was the problem Jesus had with the Pharisees and scribes in Matt.15:8. Jesus says "*in vain do they worship me*" because "*their hearts are far from me*". Worship can be empty, dishonoring to God and ultimately rejected by God when our hearts are not right.

Worship that does the right things but without the right heart is not worship as all. It is simply religious activity. The people were doing the religious activity – the things prescribed by God – sacrifices, feasts, celebrations and prayers. As a result from outward appearance they looked good. You and I would say they were worshipping God. However God rejects it and he condemns the people for heartless worship. That is why Jesus is seeking worshippers who worship in spirit and truth.

Paul brings this idea of lifestyle worship home in those well-known verses at the beginning of chapter 12. This short paragraph presents all of life as worship. We offer God our bodies and as we offer it to him what we do with our bodies becomes worship. Worship is a lifestyle.

## **I. Motivation to Worship Rom. 12:1a**

We are motivated to worship on account of God's great mercies. What are His mercies? It is everything that has been mentioned in Rom. 1-11 and more. Despite the fact that God revealed Himself, His power and His divine nature so clearly that it was evident to all, man chose not to worship God. Instead they chose to worship the creature rather than the Creator. As a result the downward spiral of sin began to take effect in their lives. All of mankind is therefore in sin. Everyone without exception is a sinner. But God, who is rich in mercy, provides free justification, through the death and resurrection of JC, the removal of all of our unrighteousness exchanged for Christ's righteousness, thereby heaping upon us all of the blessings of being a child of God – peace with God, access into His presence, standing in grace, hope and love of the Spirit poured out into our lives. He identifies us with Christ and empowers us to overcome sin in our lives. Yet despite the struggle we have with sin He never condemns us, He always prays for us, and there is nothing that can ever separate us from His love. His sovereign plan holds true not only for us but for the nation of Israel as well. His faithfulness is incomprehensible. Rd: 11:33-36

The only reasonable, logical, practical response is to worship God by presenting your body as a living sacrifice to him. The primary biblical motivation to throw ourselves into corporate and personal worship and then to make worship a lifestyle is because of the mercies of God.

Turn back to Rom 1 for a moment to see why lifestyle worship is so significant. Look at the wording in vs.19 where twice it says that God "*made it evident or made it plain*". There is something clear enough and universal enough about God, that no one can miss it.

Look more closely at vs.20b – *clearly seen and understood*. Lit. 'being understood are perceived' (*nooumena kathoratai*), where the former verb refers strictly to the intelligence and the latter to physical sight. It means that the revelation of God is perceived by the mind of every man. Please understand that Paul is not suggesting that nature contains a revelation about God which every man may see. That's not strong enough. To the contrary, Paul is saying that every man actually sees the revelation and every man actually understands it to some degree.

That has been true since the creation of the world – 20a. What exactly about God is so clearly revealed in nature that no one can miss it? Vs.20 calls it the revelation of God's invisible attributes – his eternal power and divine nature. These 2 truths are so plainly seen in creation that everyone knows it.

Why is that true? Because the world has been "made" by God. The word "made" means the "work of a skilled craftsman". It tells who the craftsman is and his ability. God acted. God planned. God designed. God crafted. He created and made. God made himself evident to all.

This world is God's house. He's left clues everywhere about what kind of God he is. From the galaxies far, far away to the birds in the air and the wildflowers in the earth; all together they tell us about God. The heavens declare it, the earth repeats it and the wind whispers it—"He is there."

Ray Stedman: *The easiest thing in the universe to believe is that God is there. You must work hard at convincing yourself that he's not there, and it seems only the very intelligent are able to do it. The rest of us, who simply see the facts...will readily accept the fact that God is there.*

What was and is the response of mankind to this revelation? Vs.21 simply states that despite the fact that they “knew” (*ginosko* – have knowledge of and understand) God they chose not to worship God. The rest is history as they say. Men deliberately deny Him the recognition and reverence which He deserves; they do not “honor Him”. They do not bow down and worship him. As a result of the failure to worship God this is what happens.

**A. Refusing to Worship Leads to Fuzzy Thinking 1:21b**

**B. Fuzzy Thinking Leads to Moral Blindness 1:21c**

**C. Moral Blindness Leads to Idolatry 1:22-23**

**D. Idolatry Results in Immorality 1:24-32**

If you want to know why the world is in a mess; why America is in a mess, why churches are in a mess and why your life may be in a mess the simple answer is that we are not worshipping God. We are worshipping everything and everyone else except God. This is why worship is so significant and why it is designed to be a lifestyle. Back to Rom.12.

**II. Mode of Worship is our Body Rom. 12:1b**

**A. Give Your Body to God**

This is not new teaching. You have heard it before but repetition is good. The word “present” is in the past tense. It denotes a once for all action. It is a decision that you make, in light of all of God’s mercies, that your body belongs to God so you give it to him.

God wants us to bring our bodies to Him – our feet, our tongue, our eyes, our hands, our heart as a living sacrifice. To offer it as an act of worship to God.

Do you remember that last week we focused on the fact that we belong to God so that we can be “proclaimers of his excellencies”? (1 Pet.2:9) To publish the goodness of God. Who are the recipients of that proclamation? 1 Pet.2:12 calls them Gentiles. We would say that those who see and hear the proclamation are those around us. We live out the life of Christ in the world among the people where God has placed us. We do that with our bodies – we are physically present. 2 Cor.4:10-11

**B. Give Your Body as a Sacrifice**

**C. Giving Your Body is Reasonable and Spiritual**

This living sacrifice is our reasonable act of worship. We worship God with our bodies. Usually we confine worship to the church, but worship does not start or end in the church. You are worshipping or not worshipping God all week long, depending on what we do with our bodies. After all, it is His and we are His temple according to 1 Cor.6:19. We have been bought with a price, we are not our own. Our bodies are the temple of the HS. What was the purpose of the OT temple? A place to meet with God. God indwells us with the HS so we are his temple so that what I do with my body is worship. How do I do that every day as a lifestyle?

### **III. Lifestyle Worship Leads to Transformation**

**Rom. 12:2**

Don't be conformed, or squeezed into a mold, but instead be transformed, changed. He doesn't say "transform yourself", which would be utterly impossible. Only God can do that. There is a direct correlation between my presentation to God of my body and my transformation. Read it this way "...*present your bodies...and...be transformed...*". "And" connects both acts so that both acts are worship – the presentation and the transformation.

The word "conform" translates a complex Greek word from which we get the English word "scheme," which in its negative sense has the idea of a trap or a scam. We might say "Don't get scammed."

The "world" refers to the organized system that leaves God out, this present evil age. The world has a set of values and beliefs, such as *look out for #1; you only go around once; you are the captain of your fate; this is all there is; etc.* Don't allow yourself to adopt those values and beliefs. But instead live in the present age "renewing" your mind – thinking biblically. How you think determines how you act.

Since the devil is the god of this world (2 Cor.4:4), we should not be surprised, indeed we should expect that he will set traps for us on every hand. He will try to scam us. Most of the traps he sets are very subtle, a way of squeezing us into the mold of the world so that like that proverbial frog in the kettle that does not realize the water temperature is rising and is paralyzed by the boiling water, we find ourselves being sucked in little by little into the world's way of thinking.

To prevent being trapped, conformed you and I need to be "transformed" literally metamorphosed – a change on the inside that produces a total transformation on the outside. It starts when we give our bodies in worship to God as a living sacrifice. It continues with mind renewal. Mind renewal occurs when we arrange our lives around the activities that produce godly change – such as corporate worship, prayer, scripture memory, fellowship, service, giving, personal worship, etc. God uses those to renew our minds so that we treasure what he treasures and do his will.

### **Conclusion**

Worship is so much more than what happens in church or even what happens in our own private quiet times with God. Worship finally comes down to how you live. All of life, the choices, the activities, the attitudes, the character we develop are simply the reflection of what we value, cherish and treasure. Then when we value what God values we do what honors God – we worship him with our life.