



Text: Romans 12:1-2<sup>1</sup>

Series: Right Living – God’s Righteousness Transforming Our Lives

Title: Worship 24/7

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Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

**“The reason I live is to worship You.”**

**Wayne & Cathy Perrin**

We just sang that declaration and now I’d like us to think for a few minutes about what it means.

When I say the word, “worship,” what do you think of? Probably, like most of us, your mind is first drawn to worship services. You might think of a particular style of music or you might think of the singing portion of a Sunday service. Typically, we connect the word “worship” with something that happens when Christians gather on Sunday.

But what I want us to think about this morning is what I’m calling “24/7” worship. I want us to think about our entire week as worship...

- Think about driving your car or selling cars as worship.
- Think about washing dishes or ordering your supper in a restaurant as worship.
- Think about studying for an exam or shooting hoops as worship.
- Think about disking your field or pulling a wrench as worship.
- Think about eating your food or cooking food for others as worship.
- Think about caring for your children at home or visiting your parents in a care home as worship.

Today we come to a transitional moment in Paul’s letter to the Romans. For the first eleven chapters Paul has been spelling out his theology of the Gospel, the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. But here in chapter 12 he moves from theology to practice, from what we believe be true to living the truth. That’s a common formula in Paul’s letters. He begins by laying a foundation of truth and then invites us to live it.

Paul wrote to the Romans...

**“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by**

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**the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:1-2**

In these two verses Paul provides with a basic road map for the living out of the Gospel every day of our lives and he calls it our “spiritual worship.” There are five important directions he gives us about living a life of worship.

**First** of all he addresses the nature of our motivation. If we’re going to live a life of worship every day, we need to live it from...

**a motivation based in God’s mercy.**

Paul wrote...

**“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God....” Romans 12:1**

That little connection word, “therefore,” points back to everything Paul has written them in the first eleven chapters of this letter. Paul summarizes all that teaching with the phrase, “the mercies of God.” We were once people who were rebels against God and deserved nothing but his wrath because of our sin, but **by his mercy** he provided a way of forgiveness through the death of his Son on our behalf, **by his mercy** he brought that good news about Jesus into our lives, **by his mercy** we believed in him and **by his mercy** he welcomed us into his family. God has shown us **mercy upon mercy**.

The motivation of God’s mercy in our lives is a recurring theme in the life and writing of Paul. This verse is a condensed summary of Paul’s way of looking at life and God’s great, overflowing mercy is foundational to his understanding of his relationship with God and his life for God. We are brought into God’s family by his mercy and we live for him by his mercy.

When Paul wrote to encourage the believers in the city of Philippi to care for one another, he appealed to them in almost the same terms as he did to the Romans. He wrote...

**“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy [ the same Greek word translated as “mercies” in Romans 12:1], complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”**  
**Philippians 2:1-2**

Early in Philippians Paul had told the Philippians that he was motivated to care for them “with the affection of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:8) Whose “affection and sympathy” was Paul appealing to as the foundation upon which the Philippians were to care for one another? The “affection and sympathy” of God



for them. “By the mercies of God,” Paul was appealing to them to love each other with the love God had for them.

How do you think we/you should respond to the mercy that God has shown to us/you? The hymn writer, Isaac Watts wrote...

**When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died  
My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride.**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small.  
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!**

You might struggle with the word “demands” as the proper way in which to express our response to God’s mercy to us. It might make our response sound too much like an obligation or requirement or duty. But I think Watts was straining to express the dynamic, powerful attraction that is generated upon our souls by God’s mercy and love. In one of his letters Paul describes that attraction and power with a word that can sometimes mean to “hold fast,” “to be gripped by,” even “to be seized” or “imprisoned.” He wrote...

**“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” 2 Corinthians 5:14-15**

The NIV translates the word as “compels us,” the KJV as “constraineth us.” God’s love and mercy and grace “grips our hearts” and calls from us our worship and devotion to him. Wayne & Cathy Perrin, in their worship song, “When I Look Into Your Holiness,” wrote...

**“When my will becomes enthralled in Your love.”**

The root of the word “enthralled” means to “enslave.” In the late eighteenth century, John Stoker wrote these words which were recently set to music by Sandra McCracken of the group, *Caedmon’s Call*:

**“Thy mercy my God is the theme of my song  
The joy of my heart and the boast of my tongue  
Thy free grace alone from the first to the last  
Hath won my affections and bound my soul fast.”**

“By the mercies of God,” Paul wrote...

**“...present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,  
which is your spiritual worship.” Romans 12:1**



**Secondly**, if we're to live a life of worship we need to make ...

**an intentional commitment to God.**

You might have heard the old adage that when it comes to a breakfast of ham and eggs, the chicken is involved but the pig is committed. Sacrifice is commitment and Paul is using the language of sacrificial worship to describe the life we are to live for God. He calls us to “present” our bodies to God as a “living sacrifice.” The language of the verse is intended to call to mind the sacrifices of the Old Testament.

The word translated as “present” literally means to “stand alongside.” When someone wanted to offer a sacrifice in the Old Testament era to either express their worship of God or to address their sin problem, they would bring a sheep or goat or bull to the temple and, standing alongside of it, they would identify the sacrifice as their representative before God, often placing their hands on the head of the sacrifice to graphically portray that the animal was being offered in their place.

Unlike animals that are sacrificed without their knowing why, we make an intentional sacrifice. The life of worship is a life of intentional dedication to God. Paul calls it our “**spiritual worship**.” The phrase is one that is a challenge to translate. The word translated as “spiritual” could also be translated as “rational” (ESV margin) or “informed” (Douglas Moo). The word translated as “worship” is drawn from the priestly services of worship offered in the temple (cf. Heb 9:1). The phrase could be translated as “**rational service**.” (ESV margin) Paul is pointing us to a worship of God that is intentional and thoughtful. It’s the product of understanding the mercies of God and responding with our lives in an appropriate, thoughtful way to who God is and what He has done for us.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us on the cross has done away with animal sacrifices for all time but it hasn’t done away with sacrifice. But instead of standing beside our sacrifice, we ourselves are the sacrifice. One New Testament scholar translates the phrase as “hand over yourselves as sacrifices.” (James D.G. Dunn) When Paul calls us to offer our “bodies” as a “living sacrifice” he’s talking about the whole of our lives, he’s referring to everything we do in and with our bodies.

The character of Paul’s expression in the Greek language<sup>2</sup> tells us that what he had in mind was a decisive, intentional offering of our lives to God’s service. The emphasis isn’t so much on a single, decisive moment as it is on the decisiveness nature of our committing of ourselves to God. I can remember many decisive, intentional moments of commitment in my life: **as a child** at Christian summer camp laying a stick on the fire at the end of camp to signal my desire to return

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<sup>2</sup> Aorist active infinitive



home to live for Christ; **as a teen** responding to God's call to attend Bible college and pursue whatever ministry he might open up for me; **as a young father**, freshly aware of my responsibilities as the head of my home, committing myself to being the spiritual leader of our home; **as a pastor**, on a weekly basis, committing myself to the study and uncompromised proclamation of God's Word. As you live a life of worship to God you will come to many spiritual crossroads, some you'll encounter on a daily basis, and each requires a fresh, decisive, intentional commitment to honour God with your life.

The prophet Micah described the life of a "living sacrifice" when he wrote...

**"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:6-8**

Doing justice is 24/7 worship. When you decide to give an honest days work for an honest days wage, you are offering worship to God. When you decided to do what is right, even when those around you are doing wrong, you are offering worship to God.

Loving kindness is 24/7 worship. When you decide to have coffee with a friend who needs a friend, you are offering worship to God. When you intentionally prepare supper for your family, even when you're tired and hungry yourself, you are offering worship to God.

Walking humbly with God is 24/7 worship. When you stop and pray that God will give you grace to handle the problems your facing at work and demonstrate the spirit of Christ, you are offering worship to God. When you sit down to write that cheque at your kitchen table to help a missionary share the love of Christ with people you'll never meet, you are offering worship to God.

When you determine to give your life to the service of God, whether it's by being a teacher in the public schools or a mechanic in the local garage or a missionary to Mongolia, you are making a "holy" sacrifice. The word "holy" means "set apart for God." It means dedicated to His service, wherever his service takes you.

When you make it your goal in life to bring pleasure to God by seeking "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," (Matthew 6:33) you are making an "acceptable" sacrifice to him. When you make it your goal to do good for others and to share with those in need, the writer of Hebrews tells us that you are offering an "acceptable" sacrifice "for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." Hebrews 13:16



Living a life of worship takes intentional commitment and there is a negative and positive side to our commitment.

**First**, there is a commitment to...

**a relentless resistance to everything contrary to God.**

Paul wrote...

**“Do not be conformed to this world...” Romans 12:2**

Our commitment is to be “holy” – that means “set apart” for God. Our commitment to being “acceptable to God” is a commitment that will often bring us into conflict with what is “acceptable” to this world and if we fail to encounter that conflict we need to seriously ask ourselves whether we’re actually living a life of worship.

Jesus taught his disciples that they would have to learn to be different from the world around them. He said...

**“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”  
Matthew 7:13-14**

The pressure to conform is a powerful force. I read of a Utah businessman who understood the power of that pressure. He rented cars to fill up his otherwise empty parking lot, and business improved dramatically. The Bible speaks of a “world spirit” whose purpose it is to work contrary to the plans of God in this world. The Apostle John exhorts us...

**“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.” 1 John 2:15-16**

One of the most celebrated translations of Romans 12, verse 2 is that offered by J.B. Phillips...

**“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold....”**

As we set our sights on living a life of worship we’re going to encounter many who are living on a different road, following a different agenda. The pressure to conform will be strong. There are many who follow the agenda of the “world”:

- Materialism: “He who dies with the most toys wins.”



- Human autonomy: “I call the shots in my life. Religion is for the weak!”
- Individualism: “Lookin’ out for #1 is the best way to live my life.”
- Moral relativism: “It’s OK if it brings you happiness and doesn’t hurt anybody else.”
- Spiritual relativism: “It’s true if it’s true for you because there are many roads to God.”
- Consumerism: “The customer is always right, so give people what they want, even in spiritual matters.”

In a recent American university cross-country championship, 123 of 128 runners missed a turn on the course. One competitor stayed on the course and began waving for his fellow competitors to join him. He was only able to convince four other runners to go with him. Asked what his competitors thought of his mid-race decision not to follow the crowd, he responded: “They thought it was pretty funny that I went the right way.”

We need to regularly reflect on the direction of our lives and ask, “Am I on course with God or am I following the ‘world’?”

**Second**, there is a commitment to...

**an ongoing renovation by the Spirit of God.**

Paul described the positive nature of our commitment to live a life of worship to God with these words...

**“but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” Romans 12:2**

Or as J.B. Phillips put it...

**“but let God remold your minds from within”**

Just like the pressure of the world to conform needs to be continually resisted, the influence of God’s Spirit in our lives needs to be continually encouraged. It isn’t an automatic renovation but it is something that God does in us as we offer ourselves as sacrifices to him.

Being “conformed” is a process in which we are shaped by a force that is external to our lives. Being “transformed” is a process in which we are shaped by a force that is internal to our lives. Paul wrote to the Corinthians...

**“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18**



If you were to ask Paul who the agent of renovation is his answer would be simple and clear: it isn't self-effort on our part, it's the Holy Spirit of God who indwells us. God saved us, Paul wrote to Titus...

**“not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit”  
Titus 3:5**

But how does the Spirit renew us? Well, let's go back to that phrase, “spiritual worship,” or “rational service.” As we become informed about the mercies of God, about the truth of who God is and what he had done, as we study God's Word, meditating on it, reflecting on it, savoring it and thinking it through, the Holy Spirit of God transforms our minds from within. We begin to think in God-oriented ways. We begin to value the things that are important to the heart of God. We begin to look at the world around us with God's perspective. In Colossians, Paul calls this process of transformation putting on...

**“the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” Colossians 3:10**

But the process of transformation doesn't stop with our minds and what we know. Remember, Paul teaches us theology to lay a foundation for obedience; he begins with truth and then calls us to live it.

**Finally**, a life of worship results in...

**a proven experience of God.**

The purpose behind resisting the pressure of the world to conform us “into its own mold” and yielding to the work of the Spirit to transform us into the likeness of Jesus, is so...

**“that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2**

The phrase translated as “by testing you may discern” actually translates just one word in Paul's letter. The word has the sense of putting something to the test to see if it is genuine. Paul is encouraging us to put God's Word into practice in our lives. He is absolutely confident that if we do, we'll find that it stands the test of real life experience. And his expectation is that as we live a life of worship we'll find that the will of God is “good and acceptable and perfect.”

These past few weeks have seen many in the congregation who have put God's Word to the test in their experience. I've watched as people have been called on to put their faith into practice. Even in the hard times of life people are finding that God's will is good and his way is perfect.



Many have commented to me about the hard times we've been experiencing as a church and how difficult these things are to bear. But I've been noticing something over these past few months. While the experiences have been hard, God has been good! I've sensed a deepening and maturing of our faith as a church. There has been a renewed seriousness about the importance of spiritual life that I don't think I've sense in the ten years I have been here. People understand the need to prepare now for challenges that may lie ahead. They realize the need to invest in spiritual resources because human life is fragile and uncertain. What I've seen is that faith in God is real strength. What I've seen is that God's will can be trusted. What I've seen is that a life of worship is the only way to really live this life we have with God.

- Is your life rooted in the mercy of God? Have you received his forgiveness and grace by believing in Jesus? Today we're going to celebrate that mercy at the Lord's Table. If you have never received God's mercy in Jesus, I invite you to call on God today to forgive you for your sin and to accept his forgiveness by believing in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.
  - Have you made an intentional commitment to live your life as a "living sacrifice" for Jesus? In your work, in your school, in your family life, in your leisure – every day, every moment belongs to him.
  - Are you making a relentless resistance to everything that is contrary to God? To what are saying "No" in the world around you? Has the world "squeezed" you into its mold or
  - Is your mind being transformed by the Spirit of God into the mold of Jesus Christ? What are you doing to feed the work of the Spirit in your life?
  - Are you putting your faith in practice? Knowing God's truth isn't enough; God wants us to live it and demonstrate to a watching world that His will is real living.
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- Invitation to The Lord's Table
  - Songs of Communion:
    - Thy Mercy, My God
    - The Wondrous Cross
  - Benediction