

## Romans

The Root Of True Worship Is Holy Behavior

November 15, 2015

### I. Holy Behavior Is Necessary For True Worship

A. We have worked our way through the first 11 chapters of Romans, and as I said last Sunday, I am thankful for your patience and endurance, because much of what is in those chapters is doctrine – doctrine which forms the foundation for much of our theology.

1. However, it is important for us to remember that doctrine, and even theology are never intended to stand alone, as if knowing the doctrinal teachings of the Bible is sufficient. The Bible brings to light doctrine, and from it we build theology, so that we can know what God is like and what He expects, in order to live accordingly.
2. For as Jesus said, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:17).
  - a. James addresses this same truth when he said, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22).
  - b. And because we’re studying Romans, I will include Paul’s words from Romans 2:13, “for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.”
3. My reason for starting this way today is to make it clear that we are not leaving the first eleven chapters of Romans behind, as if we are done with them. Rather, we will be using them as the doctrinal basis for the practical truths about Christian living taught from Romans 12:1 through the end of Romans 16.

B. Prayer

C. Romans 12:1-2 . . . 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.

### II. Holy behavior is the foundation for worship that is in spirit and truth

A. Therefore I urge you, brethren . . .

1. When the word “therefore” appears in a sentence, it normally refers back to something previously stated and uses that information as the reason or basis for what follows.
2. It is possible that this “therefore” is referring back to the essential truths taught in the first 11 chapters of Romans, such as –

- a. Ongoing, unrepentant rebellion against God brings judgement, and often God's judgement includes making it harder to repent and come to faith in Jesus Christ.
  - b. Without question, justification is by faith and salvation is a gift from God. Yet the righteousness required for justification includes both the perfect righteousness of Christ and our progressive growth in righteousness so that we live a life of faithful obedience.
  - c. Those who are born again no longer have to sin, and ought never practice sin – for as Paul says, if we are living according to the flesh, we will die. But if, by the Holy Spirit, we are putting to death the deeds of our flesh, we will live. And Paul goes on to say that all who are living according to the leading of the Holy Spirit are children of God.
3. However, we cannot say with certainty the “therefore” of Romans 12:1 refers to most everything in the first eleven chapters, but we can be certain it refers back to Romans 11:13-36, because those verses are written directly to Gentile believers.
- a. And in those verses, Paul tells us that if the Jews were broken off from the cultivated olive tree for unbelief, Gentile Christians can also be broken off for unbelief.
  - b. Therefore, since it is also possible for Gentile believers to be broken off for unbelief, Paul is now urging us to the kind of choices and behavior that will make certain we continue living by faith.

B. by the mercies of God

1. Or we might say, by means of the mercies of God, or enabled and empowered by the mercies God.
  - a. Remember the beginning of Romans 8, where Paul says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? He said that because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the law of sin and of death. And for what purpose? So that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
  - b. And Paul goes on to say that if, by the empowerment and assistance of the Holy Spirit, we are putting to death the deeds of the flesh, we will live – that is, we will live godly lives now, and we will be given the gift of eternal salvation so that we live forever with God.
2. Therefore, though Paul's exhortation to holy living is based on eleven chapters of doctrine, it is made possible by the indwelling empower-

ment and assistance of the Holy Spirit. In other words, though we anchor our faith to the truths contained in God's word, we anchor our ability to faithfully live according to those truths to the empowerment and assistance of God's indwelling Holy Spirit.

- a. It is this enabling work of God within us that makes loving God with ALL our heart, soul, mind and strength, completely possible.
  - b. It is this enabling work of God within us that allows Peter to say – without hesitation or qualification – that we are to be holy in ALL our behavior just as God is holy.
  - c. And it is this same enabling power of God within us that makes it completely reasonable for Paul to call us –
    - (1) To walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called (Ephesians 4:1);
    - (2) And to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord so as to please Him in all respects (Colossians 1:10);
    - (3) And to walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls us into His own kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12).
3. The important truth here is that God not only tells us that we are to be holy, and why we are to be holy, He also enables us to be holy.

### C. to present your bodies

1. As you may recall, Paul spoke of presenting our bodies to God in Romans 6.
  - a. In Romans 6:13, Paul says we are to present our members (*body*) as instruments of righteousness to God.
  - b. In Romans 6:19, Paul says we are to present our members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.
2. But why do we need to present our bodies to God as living and holy sacrifices?
  - a. The place to begin answering this question is Romans 6:16, where Paul states the principle that when we present ourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, we are slaves of the one we obey– and that is the principle. Then Paul goes on to say that we either present ourselves as slaves to sin, resulting in death, or as slaves of obedience to God, resulting in righteousness.
  - b. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus affirms the power of this principle to produce righteousness when He says that whoever will hunger and thirst after righteousness, will have their hunger and thirst satisfied. Peter affirms the power of this principle to produce evil

in 1 Peter 2:11, where he warns us to abstain from fleshly (*bodily*) lusts because they wage war against our soul.

- c. Now to drive home the reason it is so vital to present our bodies as holy sacrifices to God, I will read Paul's somewhat comprehensive list of the deeds of the flesh, from Galatians 5:19-21. And as I read this list, think about how each evil brings some measure of destruction and death into your life and the lives of those around you – immorality (*sexual*), impurity, sensuality (*excessive desires of the 5 senses*), idolatry, sorcery, enmities (*hatred, hostility*), strife (*conflict*), jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes (*quarrels, arguments*), dissensions (*ongoing, unresolved disputes*), factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these
- d. The point is, whether your heart is pure or deceitfully wicked, it reveals itself – for good or for evil – through your body, that is, through your attitudes, body language, words, tone of voice, and deeds. This is why John says, “Let us not love with word or with tongue (*claim we love*), but in deed and truth (*show our love by our actions*)” (1 John 3:18). And Jesus tells us it is the actions of our bodies that demonstrate our good works and bring glory to our Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

D. our bodies are to be a living sacrifice,

1. Being holy in heaven is not proof of faith in the face of being tempted toward unbelief, nor is it proof of a God-approved pursuit of righteousness in the face unrelenting temptations to unrighteousness. Now is the time to prove we are living by faith. Now is the time to prove we hunger and thirst for righteousness.
2. However, does presenting our bodies while alive mean there is no dying required for this sacrifice? Of course not! Death is a vital part of this sacrifice, but the dying we must do is a dying to such things as our old nature, our sinful passions, our self-rule, our evil thoughts, our selfish desires, our discontent, and our pride.
3. Jesus spoke of this kind of dying when He said, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me (Matthew 16:24).

E. our bodies are to be a holy sacrifice,

1. To be a holy sacrifice is to be wholly or fully set apart to the Lord, and therefore – according to the OT picture of a holy sacrifice – unblemished. To be a blemished sacrifice is to be partly set apart to

the Lord and partly set apart to something other than the Lord, such as the selfish pleasures of the flesh, and some of the allurements of the world, and some of the offerings of the devil.

2. It is possible you are wondering just how important is it that we present our bodies a holy sacrifice to God? After all, everyone sins, at least sometimes. Plus, God is exceedingly gracious and forgiving.
3. However, in spite of these realities, the scripture tells us that a holy sacrifice is extremely important to God. For example:
  - a. In speaking through Moses, God said that any natural born Jew or alien residing in Israel who presents an offering to be burned, must present one that is without defect to be accepted by God (Leviticus 22:17-22).
  - b. And when Moses reviewed this truth many years later, he said it this way, "You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 17:1).
  - c. In the NT, Jesus said it is the pure in heart who see God (Matthew 5:8). And Hebrews says without sanctification, or holy living, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).
  - d. To look further into God's feelings about, and response to, the repeated failure of offering a holy sacrifice, read Malachi 1:6-14.
4. There is one more thing I want to say in contrasting the blemished with the unblemished – though the single-minded Christian may not be perfectly holy, it is the unrepentant double-minded Christian who is blemished because he is willfully practicing sin. This is the one who cannot offer his body to God as a holy sacrifice.

#### F. acceptable to God

1. These three words simply clarify who sets the standard, and who measures the offering to see if it meets the standard.
2. And according to God's word, His standard is whole-hearted, whole-life holiness. However, because of our human weaknesses and occasional foolishness, God is patient, gracious, forgiving, and even long-suffering toward those who continue to work out their salvation from day to day and over the course of their life-time as a believer.

#### G. which is your spiritual service of worship.

1. This final phrase is profound, for in its context it points to two truths about worship that are vital to worshiping God.

- a. The first truth this phrase points to comes from the first chapter of Romans where we see that distrust of God feeds a growing ungratefulness toward God, which in turn motivates us to move away from revering and worshiping God, which in turn leads to worshiping things other than God and to a growing participation in unrighteousness through the willful practice of sin. In other words, ungodliness moves us away from the true worship of God and into the worship of things other than God so that our ungodliness continues to grow.
  - b. The second truth pointed to by this phrase comes from the accumulative truths of Romans 2-11, which in essence tells us that holiness in the daily affairs of life is what God wants of us. And Paul connects the godliness that God wants from us to the true worship of God.
  - c. In other words, holiness of life produces true worshipers who worship in spirit and in truth. And this matters because these are the kind of worshipers God is seeking to worship Him (John 4:23-24).
  - d. And though this truth is supported by other scriptures, I will read only Micah 6:6-8, “With what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves (*worship music*)? [7] Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil (*words of praise*)? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul (*sorrow for sin*)? [8] He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”
2. What I hope we can see is that there is a direct link, and an inseparable link between worship and behavior. True worship comes out of godly behavior and godly behavior both drives true worship and verifies that our worship is true.
    - a. For example, if we spend our Sunday worship time honoring God for His faithfulness, yet worry and fret over things during the week, our behavior does not verify our worship. In fact, in cases like this, our behavior contradicts our worship, thus making our worship hypocritical rather than in spirit and in truth.
    - b. In speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus addressed this hypocrisy of worship when He said, “You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you (*Isaiah 29:13*): “This people honors Me

with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. [Therefore] in vain they worship Me, teaching (*and as a result practicing*) as doctrines the precepts of men” (Matthew 15:7-9).

- c. Now it is true that we express our worship through words, music, liturgy, rituals, dance, raising of hands, bowing, kneeling, laying prostrate on the floor, contemplative silence, and tears. However, for these to be expressions of worship that is in spirit and in truth, they must come from those whose lives verify the truth of the worship they are expressing.
3. There is one more truth I want to convey here. Worship is not something we do sometimes, but something we are doing all the time. For example, it is common for Christians to think of going to church as an occasion to worship God. And it is also common for Christians, in the privacy of their home, to play worship music or read scripture as a means of entering into a time of worship.
    - a. Now I want to assure you those are good things to do, for throughout the life of the church, public and private times of worship have taken a number of forms that honor the One who is being worshiped.
    - b. However, (*and this however will require some thinking*), since true worship grows out of a godly life, and since Jesus says to let our light (*lives*) shine in such a way that others will see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven, shouldn't we also think of going to the workplace, the grocery store, the school, the dinner table, and other such places as occasions to worship? Are these not also places to give God praise and bring Him glory by how we behave?

### III. Conclusion

- A. Our outward expressions of worship are important, for they show our brothers and sisters in Christ and the unbelievers around us what we think of God. But they will only be true expressions of worship if they come from a life that agrees with our outward worship.
- B. After all, worship is our way of saying God is worth-it, or God is worthy. But worthy of what? Worthy of trust, love, obedience, service, and gratitude. If our behavior says something different than God is worthy, we are not only being hypocrites in our worship, our hypocrisy we will turn the world away from worshiping God.
- C. Therefore, may we be those who magnify the LORD, and may we in word and deed, exalt His name.