

## Your Spiritual Worship

Romans 12:1 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

*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**.*

### Introduction

It's been four weeks since we started online worship. Something strange to me a month ago has become a norm. By online worship, we worship the LORD on YouTube. It opened up the horizon for worship and enables us to reach out to a broader audience. We are averaging over 200 views per week for each service.

Although our preferences may vary in style of music (contemporary vs. traditional) or ritual (the majority of churches stay away from traditional worship format such as hymns/organ music for prelude and postlude), all online services have one goal in common: worship the LORD God. At our own online services, we stick to the traditional format of worship such as prayer of confession and assurance of pardon followed by joys/concerns/and praises and pastoral prayers. And, of course, every online service has a sermon, the proclaimed Word of God.

Although online worship is a meaningful way of worship the LORD God, I believe it should never, or ever will, replace the physical assembly at God's house for worship and prayer. To me, online worship to physical worship is a virtual meal with family before computer screen to sitting around the dinner table eating together elbow to elbow. May this lockdown come to end soon. Amen.

Anyway, please come and think with me about the meaning of and purpose of worship.

### Content

Let's listen to today's text one more time. Romans 12:1: *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.*

Here, we find the three-fold element of worship: *God, our bodies, holy and acceptable to God.* First, we will find out that the purpose and focus of worship is **the Lord, not us**.

Next, in worship, we present our **bodies** to the Lord. Finally, in worship, we present our bodies as **holy, acceptable and pleasing to the Lord**.

**Worship is to the Lord.** Not to any creature or anything else. Not to ourselves, either. Worship is only to Him and Him alone. God is the only object of our worship. That's why the first and the second Ten Commandment forbid us from worshipping any other gods or idols but the LORD God.<sup>3</sup> *"You shall have **no other gods** before Me. ...<sup>5</sup> You shall **not worship them or serve them**; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,..."* (Exodus 20:3, 5). The sole focus of worship is God not us.

Here's a question for you. What's the fundamental difference between your favorite show and worship? You may spend an equal amount of time for both. You may even put the equal amount of money into them. Please listen carefully. Entertainment is for your own pleasure, yet worship is for God's pleasure.

In entertainment, you are the audience. In worship, God is the audience. In entertainment, you expect your entertainment to please you. In worship, God expects you to please Him. In entertainment, you expect the show to make you feel good. When it happens, we call the show worth watching. If not, you call it a waste.

Worship, on the other hand, has a totally different value system. Worship, by nature, is purposed and designed to please God. In worship, after God is pleased with our offering, praise, thanks, and even confession, we invoke His blessings upon us. Here's the yardstick for the meaningful worship: does it glorify and honor God alone? E.g. That's why some modern worship songs are no good because they focus on their feelings, not on God.

**Signs of modern worship:** TV shaped the way we understand what the worship should be like. We say sermon should be around 15 minutes. E.g. TED talk is 18 minutes. Furthermore, we rather *want* to have our **ears** tickled than sound teaching from the Word of God the Bible (2 Timothy 4:3). For instance, the message shouldn't talk about sin, repentance, death, or money. Why? They make us feel guilty or depressed.

That's how TV dramas and news trained and poisoned the mind of God's people. Now, we say worship should be exciting and entertaining. Well, folks, going with those standards, many worships even the ones that are recorded in the Bible would fail the test (E.g. Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Gideon). No wonder people nowadays stop going to church. Beware of the mindsets you may carry over from TV or secular culture that blurs the focus, purpose, and content of worship. Worship is to the Lord.

**What do we bring to God in worship?** Offerings and tithes? That's what most people think. However, today's text says to present **our bodies**. Yes, your body and mine. Hmm. Bodies (I will talk about it later). We the worshipers often misunderstand that our monetary offerings is the only thing we give to the Lord in worship. But what the Lord wants in worship is our hearts and minds, our entire beings. That includes our body, soul and spirit, along with prayers and praises, not just money offerings.

Something about the bodies. A little background info on the offerings to the Lord in the Old Testament. In those days, the worshipers would bring animal **sacrifices** to be slaughtered on their behalf. For the forgiveness of their sins and so forth. The sacrificial animal must die to be accepted as offering. Every sacrifice was the body that was dead. No sacrifice was alive.

Today, we worship the same God as the Old Testament and the New, and we still bring in our offerings. However, now God commands us to bring not dead animal sacrifices but living bodies of our own as offerings. Thank God that Jesus forever ended the animal sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10). What do we bring again? Our bodies, but what it really means is our entire being. Our lives. Alive.

When we present ourselves in worship, we declare to God and ourselves that we are dead to self (like the animal is slayed) but alive to God. We are reminded that we are dead to sin. That means, we no longer respond or serve the demand of sin and the flesh in us. Being alive to God means that we surrender all to Him. We no longer pursue our own selfish happiness, but we respond to His call to seek His Kingdom and His righteousness first. We offer our bodies as instruments of God. We seek to do everything to His glory and honor. We surrender to His will in our thinking, words, and doing. E.g. Tongue to say kind words. Hands to work hard. Hearts to love others. Use members of our bodies not to hurt but help others.

Let's think about the ways people dishonor their bodies in the name of ownership: "This is my life. My body. I do whatever I want to do with my own body." They are destroying their bodies through misuse, abuse, and overuse hurting themselves and their loved ones. Remember God calls our body as His temple. The ownership belongs to God, not to us. We are stewards not owners. Mind you that there was the daily offering at God's temple. Same goes with our worship where we present our bodies to the Lord. It is a daily thing. Not weekly. Or, monthly. "A whole-person commitment lived out in daily existence" (p. 710, 38 *B Word Biblical Commentary*, James D. G. Dunn)

**Holy and Acceptable:** the last point is this: we present our bodies, our entire being, as *holy and acceptable* to the Lord.

**Holy:** We cannot think of anything or anybody holy without thinking of the Holy God. So, here, for us to present our bodies holy means that the Holy God has called us to be different from the world. He separates us for His divine plan. For us to present our bodies holy means that we prepare ourselves according to God's standards (i.e., be ye holy as He is) so that our offering is worthy to be presented, offered to, and accepted by the Holy God. It also means that our lives to be 'dedicated to the Lord' and 'set apart' from the world for God's purpose. For Him to use us for His kingdom and purpose.

**Acceptable/pleasing to the Lord:** Something that God loves to receive. Like sweet smelling incense and fragrance. Proverbs 15:8 says the LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked. Yes, even the wicked can offer their sacrifice, yet the Lord detests it. By the way, Leviticus is very thorough in laying out the qualifications of the animals to be accepted to the Lord: age, physical appearance, sickness and so forth. The bottom line is this: any animal with defects, scratches, blemishes, injuries, blindness, missing parts, and so forth is unfit as sacrifice to the Lord. In other words, present the best animal to the Lord. In Malachi 1:8, the Lord reasons with His people about the subpar sacrifices they would bring to Him: *But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?"* says the LORD of hosts.

When you give a gift to your boss, you would put your mind to it, paying attention to the last detail including the quality and the look. How much more, we need to give the best gift to God the Almighty? The lesson? Make sure that you give your best, your best time, your best offerings, your best heart, and your best love and commitment to the Lord. Not half-hearted. Not half-devotion. But the whole heart with all might and strength.

## Conclusion

As for closing, I would like to read the Scripture Isaiah 1. You will hear what kind of worship the Lord is pleased to accept from us.

*Hear the word of the LORD,  
You rulers of Sodom;  
Give ear to the instruction of our God,  
You people of Gomorrah.  
"What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?"*

Says the LORD.

*“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams*

*And the fat of fed cattle;*

*And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.*

<sup>12</sup> *“When you come to appear before Me,*

*Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?*

<sup>13</sup> *“Bring your worthless offerings no longer,*

*Incense is an abomination to Me.*

*New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—*

*I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.*

<sup>14</sup> *“I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts,*

*They have become a burden to Me;*

*I am weary of bearing them.*

<sup>15</sup> *“So when you spread out your hands in prayer,*

*I will hide My eyes from you;*

*Yes, even though you multiply prayers,*

*I will not listen.*

*Your hands are covered with blood.*

<sup>16</sup> *“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;*

***Remove the evil of your deeds*** from My sight.

***Cease to do evil,***

<sup>17</sup> ***Learn to do good;***

***Seek justice,***

***Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan,***

***Plead for the widow.*** (Isaiah 1:10-17)

Present your **bodies** a living and holy **sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual **service of worship**. Worship and service: Go hand in hand. Live out God’s presence in us every day. Remember Isaiah 1. Amen.