

A WORSHIPFUL LIFE STYLE

Romans 12:1-2

There are 10 Greek words in the New Testament that are translated by the English word "worship." However, the Greek term most frequently used is PROSKUNEO which literally means, "to kiss toward." The concept is illustrated by one who would fall at the feet of a king, and kiss his hand or his garment (See Jividen J., *Worship in Song*, Star Bible Pub., 1987, pp. 1-10). It is an act of reverence and submission to our awesome God. When Satan asked Jesus to bow before him, the answer given was, **"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10)**. Neither angels, **(Rev. 22:8-9 – And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard, and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God.)**, nor men are to be worshipped **(Acts 10:25-26 – "And when it came about that Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up; I too am just a man")**. In our worship of God, we are to please Him and not ourselves. Therefore, we are told God seeks those who worship Him in "spirit and in truth" **(John 4:23-24 – "An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth")**. When men do what pleases them in worship, Christ said this constitutes "vain worship" **(Matt. 15:9 – "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men")**. For a more complete treatment of what constitutes corporate worship as set forth by God, see my paper on "The Worship of the Primitive Church."

In the New Testament, in addition to the corporate worship, there is an individual worship required that is described in the Romans 12:1-2 text from which this study is formed. Before commenting on this individual worship, attention should be drawn to the fact that both of these worship forms constitute an important part of what is often referred to as the "priesthood of all believers." We do not today have a special priestly cast as was the case in the Old Testament. As you will recall, in order to be a part of that priesthood one had to be a descendant of Levi, and specifically a descendant of Aaron, the brother of Moses (Num. 3:5-12). The priest of the Old Testament stood between God and the people, and ministered to them by offering up sacrifices in their behalf.

In the New Testament every Christian is a priest (**1 Peter 2:5,9 – “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, Rev. 1:6 – He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever, Amen”**), and needs only Christ to stand between him/her and the Lord (**1 Tim. 2:5 – “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”**). We also offer sacrifices, but the ones we offer are no longer physical, but spiritual. These spiritual offerings point to the “living sacrifice” mentioned in our text: **“I urge you therefore, 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.”** Notice that this “living sacrifice” is referred to as our “spiritual service of worship.” This is to indicate that our whole life is worship to the Lord in as much as our life is under the control and direction of the Lord. In the following points it will be shown what is included in this “spiritual service of worship.”

One component is the part we play in carrying out the mission of the church “outside” of the corporate worship. Each of us possesses gifts (talents) which we have received from the Lord, (**1 Cor. 7:7 – “However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that”**). According to our gifts, we are positioned in the body (**1 Cor. 12:18 – “But God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired”**). In judgment we will be held accountable for the way we have used our gifts (**Matt. 25:14-30**). It is the intention of the Lord that we put our gifts to work as they indicate our individual ministries that serve the Lord (**Rom. 12:6-8 – “And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly; if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness”**). Since we work for the Lord, and our service is basically to Him (although we achieve that by serving people – **Matt. 25:34-40**), we are not to worry if others see us and praise us as we work (**Col. 3:23-24 – “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve”**). It is the function of the leaders of the church to help us identify and use our gifts in our ministries (**Eph. 4:7-12 – “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, When He ascended**

on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men....And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ”). This brings about forms of ministry that are broad and varied, and constitutes our function as body parts, which function will lead to the church growing in number in an environment of love (**Eph., 4:15-16 – “Speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every join supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love”).** This concept is explored more fully in the paper entitled, How To Discover Our Gifts.

A second component of this “living sacrifice” ministry has to do with the charge in verse 2 of our text that we be separated from the world (**“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”).** We are told that we must be holy even as God is holy (**1 Peter 1:14-16 – “As obedient children do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, because it is written, You shall be holy, for I am holy”).** It is God’s word that is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (**Psl. 119:105**). We are to be diligent in studying the word of truth so as to use its content correctly (**2 Tim. 2:15**). If we choose to walk in the darkness rather than in the light of God’s Word nothing about us will please or serve the Lord (**1 John 1:6 – “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth”).** We are to “put off” all the works of darkness to the best of our ability (**Eph. 4:17-22 – “This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit”).** Minds that are fleshly are in fact called “hostile the Lord” (**Rom. 8:7-8 – “The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of**

God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God”). None of us is perfect so this part of our battle is never fully won. However what is required is that we acknowledge our sin, repent, and turn away from it (**1 John 1:8-10 – “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us”).** It is urgent that we do not justify our sin and cling to it (**Heb. 10:26-27 – “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries”).** The alternative is to set our minds on things of the spirit. When we do so, we are promised the on-going help of the Spirit of God will strengthen us (**Rom. 8:10-16 – “If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you...For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father! The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God’).** Remember that when we were baptized, we received the gift of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38 – “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”).** Notice that this is not a gift from the Holy Spirit, but the gift of the Spirit Himself! Then we are promised He will produce His fruit in our lives---“**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control**”--- all things that will aid us in being holy, and in serving God and man (Gal. 5:22-25). Returning again to verse 2 of our text, by being avid students and practitioners of God’s word, we gain experiential proof of how good, acceptable and perfect God’s word is!

The third aspect of this “living sacrifice worship” has to do with the interaction that exists between us and the Lord as he opens doors, and gives strength and help as He brings us into position to fulfill our ministries. Here is something that should give us courage and overcome our fears: “**So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for**

His good pleasure” (Phil; 2:12-13). We too are armed with the same conviction of Paul, that we can do all the things that are in God’s will for us to do by the strength that He will supply (**Phil. 4:13 – “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”**). However the passage in **Eph. 3:20-21** will literally “blow you out of the water!” **“Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever, Amen.”**

With God, availability matters more than ability. If we are not available, no matter how gifted we may be, we will have no usefulness to the Lord. If we are available, the Lord is capable of making up for whatever we lack. Moses is a good example....As he attempted to excuse himself from the special mission to which the Lord was calling him, he began telling the Lord about all the things he lacked. The Lord interrupted with a question: “What do you have in your hand?” When Moses said he had a rod, the Lord in essence said, “That is enough...you, me, and the stick will get the job done”...And they did!! (Ex. 4:1-5, 10-17).

SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW PERSONS HAVE SURRENDERED THEMSELVES TO THE LORD WITH WHAT THEY HAD IN HAND:

An industrial builder in San Francisco who had not be applying himself in the Lord’s work, repented and brought 13 people to the Lord in one year during my ministry there. A retired official of Safeway Stores was able to give several hundreds of dollars per month to support a Christian school by picking up and selling used newspapers during my ministry in San Fernando Valley. A lady teacher in Sun Valley, CA. had a ministry that involved spending Saturdays in a rest home doing the hair of mature ladies. I know a badly spastic man who for years did an outstanding mission work in Portugal. I know of a partially retarded man in Louisiana who brought many to the Lord through religious tracts he placed on their garbage cans.

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