

Reasonable Worship

By Jess Arnds



Bible Text:

Romans 12:1-2

Preached on:

Sunday, October 14, 2018

Providence Church

2146 Buford Hwy

Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

Website:

www.providenceduluth.org

Online Sermons:

www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch

Let's go ahead and open to the book of Romans 12. Thank you so much for the skill, again, for leading us in worship, Ted and Jennifer and the guys, with that new song. He is worthy. He is worthy. He is worthy. He is worth more than anything. I mean, far more than anything and to be able to express that in song together with you and to be led in that with people of like faith, man, just brings tears to my eyes. So thank you. Seriously.

So as you turn to Romans 12, I just want to acknowledge that I realize Ty preached on Romans 12:1 and 2 recently and this is not meant as a correction or a competition with that. He did a great job. My focus this morning will be a little bit different than his. His was explaining the topic of basically the dynamics of the heart.

I guess I need to turn this on. So we'll blame everything going wrong on Bethany's absence today. Can you hear me? Okay.

So Ty preached this message and his intention...

It's glowing. Good? Good? Okay. Alright, there we go. Bethany.

So Ty's intention was to explain the dynamics of the heart and so what was interesting, he had asked me several weeks ago to preach in October and I had settled on a Saturday night on preaching Romans 12. It's near and dear to my heart and I really feel like it's something the Lord would want us to hear, so I had wrestled through different passages and landed on Romans 12 and then I showed up Sunday morning and Ty preached Romans 12, and so I contemplated picking a different passage but this is just such a burden on my heart and I take it as God's providence that he really wants us to have this in our minds and it affecting the way that we think and really how we live. So I've decided to go ahead and go with it. I'm taking this really to flesh out this particular passage, not a particular topic, but this passage and how it fits into the book of Romans and really what it means, how the book of Romans really walks out the meaning of this passage. So over the next three weeks, we're going to talk through Romans 12:1-2 but we're going to talk about a lot more than just those two verses. I really want to give feet to the concepts that we find here. What does it actually look like to present your body as a living sacrifice.

So I've entitled this series "Reasonable Worship." Reasonable worship. So as we think about this, let's look at this passage, verses 1 through 2 of chapter 12 and let's really try to figure out what this means, not just the meaning of it in terms of the definitions but what does this look like for your life and mine.

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. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let's beg God to help us this morning. Let's pray.

Father, as we approach this passage, we recognize our own weakness and frailty, the weakness of our own heart to hear and to receive what you've said, and the weakness of the preacher to even adequately explain it. We need you. We need your Spirit, Lord, to take what we are hearing and what we are thinking through and to apply it to our heart, to open our eyes to what this means, to move us to believe and to follow what you've said. So Lord, we beg you that you would do that in our hearts this morning. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So as we contemplate this passage, I want to start with a couple of questions. The first is what is your purpose in life? What is the reason for what you do? The things that you decide? Why did you get up this morning and why are you here? What drives you? Here's another question, what do you sacrifice for? What do you give up in order to gain something? What are the things that you are willing to endure discomfort, that you give money to, that you give time to? What do you think is reasonable for God to ask of you? Like what's the line? Is there a limit to what you believe is, "Okay, I've given God enough?" So with those questions in our mind, I want to dive into this passage. I want to start by giving you an overview. We'll walk through the words, the actual words of this passage and we'll jump into some of the things that this passage brings up.

So starting at the very beginning, he says, "Therefore I urge you." So when you see that there's a word there "therefore," it means it's coming on the heels of something else. It's sort of like an equal sign. Paul is saying, "Because of what I just told you in the previous 11 chapters, I now urge you. Because of what I have just told you, I urge you by the mercies of God, or because of the mercies of God," that he had just explained. "So because of those mercies, I urge you to present your bodies as a sacrifice, living holy and acceptable to God." The picture is that of a priest presenting a sacrifice, an offering on the altar. Not an atoning sacrifice for sins but a gift to God. That sacrifice is laid on the altar and it is burned up. It was not used for anything else other than for that sacrifice. Except here in Romans 12 the picture is more like the priest is laying his own body on the altar, presenting his entire being as a sacrifice, as a gift to God.

So look at that. He says, "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, as a sacrifice living holy and acceptable." Think about this: what do you do in your body? What are the things that you do in your body? I mean, it's almost a dumb question, right? We do everything in our body. What are the things that you do that does not involve your body? Even thinking involves your brain. As I demonstrated this morning, if the body is not functioning well, your thinking doesn't go very well and your words don't go very well, the very things you speak. Even if you're disabled to a certain degree, everything you do is done in your body. Your body is what you hear and listen through; it's what you speak through; it's what you see through. Your body is the medium through which everything in your life happens and here he's saying, "present your bodies as a living sacrifice." Nothing is left out. Nothing is held back. This is all encompassing.

And notice the language that he uses here. He doesn't say, "You know, y'all ought to consider presenting," I actually wrote "y'all" in my notes. I'm just contextualizing. "Y'all ought to consider presenting your body as a sacrifice. I think it'd be a good idea." He doesn't say, "Hey, I've got a suggestion for you, why don't you offer your body as a living sacrifice?" He doesn't say, "You know, if you get around to it." He doesn't say, "Hey, I've got a proposition for you. Here's something that will really benefit your life."

He says, "I urge you." This word for "urge" means "to beg; to implore; to exhort." This goes beyond a mere command. This goes beyond an instruction. This goes beyond something that's just an option, not just an idea. This is something that he could command you to do and it has the force of a command but beyond that command, Paul is personally invested in you fulfilling this. "I urge you. I urge you to present your body a living sacrifice. I urge you to give every single moment, every single thing that you have as a sacrifice to God. I urge you to do this." He doesn't say, "Hey, I know you're going to struggle and it's not a big deal." He doesn't say, "Do you know what? I know you've got some things that you're working on and that's not a problem." He says, "I urge you. Every single thing that you possess. You have a body through which you do everything, you care for that body, you use that to get up and walk to the store, you use that for everything you do. Use it completely and totally and utterly as a sacrifice to God. Hold nothing back. Reserve nothing."

How does that strike you? Is that reasonable of God to ask that? Is it reasonable for Paul to urge that? "You're kind of getting a little pushy, Paul. I'm okay with you giving me some ideas and some suggestions, Paul, but now you're getting in my kitchen." What have you withheld? What are you unwilling to put on the altar? The Scripture here is not just commanding you to put it on the altar, it is urging you and this morning I urge you, I urge all of us to lay everything on the altar as a sacrifice to God. I urge you to do this. Now this sounds like a tall order, doesn't it? That's big stuff. That almost sounds unreasonable, as we've been talking about. You're begging me to give everything, my own body, for the sole purpose of serving God.

Okay now, Paul doesn't just command them, he doesn't just urge them, now he goes a step further at the end of verse 1 and he says, "This is your spiritual service of worship." As Ty explained a few weeks ago, the word for "spiritual" here is actually better

translated "reasonable" or "logical." "This is reasonable for me to ask this of you," Paul says. "This is reasonable for me to command this. This is reasonable for me to urge you and to get in your kitchen to basically demand that you give your life as a sacrifice to God." This is reasonable. This is logical. This makes sense. It is actually unreasonable for you to withhold this sacrifice. It is unreasonable and illogical for you to not lay your body down and to present it as a sacrifice to God.

But what is the logic here? What is the reasoning here? How is this so? You're talking about...I mean, think about that, what an investment that you're making giving this sacrifice to God. I mean, can you imagine what that would actually look like? That you wake up and the second you wake up, your body is given to another person's will, not your own. Not your own desires. Not your own preferences. Not your own hopes and dreams. What makes this a reasonable request? Because if you listen to the radio, that is certainly not the value system that our world offers, right? I'm going to do what I want with my body and you can't tell me, you can't judge me for anything I do with my body. Paul says this is only reasonable. So how does this work? What is the logic of worship? Well, if you look at the passage here, Paul says, "because of the mercies of God. Because of God's mercies, this is logical. This is reasonable for you to lay down everything."

So we will take today and the next two weeks to explain this, but today I want to explain our purpose; that we are created for worship. Part 2 will be a further discussion of God's mercy which is the motivation for our sacrifice. And part 3 will be our response to this, okay? Our purpose, God's mercy; our response, then, is complete sacrifice, complete sacrifice to God. But today we have to start with the fact that our purpose in existence is to worship God. The reason that you're here, the reason you're alive is to worship God and to bring him glory.

The Webster's Dictionary defines worship in this way, it says, "to honor or reverence as a divine being or a supernatural power; to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor or devotion." To honor someone such that you value them and you respect them and that actually impacts your decisions on a daily basis. There are about six Hebrew words translated "worship" and about nine different Greek words are translated as "worship" and they have definitions that look like this, "to bow down," so there's an element of humility in that, an element of honor. This person is higher than me, I bow down to them. "To serve; to bow in prayer; to honor; to value; to show reverence for; and to show devotion to." And these are just the words that are directly translated as "worship," but you can see that the idea of worship is much more than just raising your hands at a concert and it's much more than just sentimental feelings towards God. Worship is much more than just singing. It involves, a heart of worship is a reverent admiration of someone or something valued and considered worthy of service and sacrifice, and when people worship something, they believe that it is worth devoting themselves to it.

What do people worship? What do they devote themselves to? What do they sacrifice for? What do they give money for? What do they devote time for? What gets them up in the morning or what keeps them in bed? That is what they worship. What makes you anxious and troubled is tied to what you worship. What your hope is set on is tied to what

you worship. Worship is everything. We are worshiping creatures. We were created to worship. We were created to assign value to something and to devote our life to something bigger than ourselves. What is that for you?

I mean, yesterday you see people worshiping at the altar of sports and college football. Their whole well-being is dependent on how their team does and they wear the colors and they spend all kinds of money to travel with this team and their house is decorated with their colors, and they talk about it. I remember me growing up, football was a big deal and probably reached its height in high school where Thursday afternoon was my brother's freshman football game. We'd go and watch football. Friday night was my varsity football game. Saturday, we watched college football all day, of course after practicing football in the morning and watching the game film from the night before. Sunday, couldn't wait to get home from church so we could watch football and fall asleep on the couch watching football. Monday night after football practice that afternoon, you're rushing home to catch the game because on the West Coast, you have to rush home to catch the game. That just left Tuesday and Wednesday to talk about it, right? What a waste of time. I would be such a smarter person right now if I devoted the same effort and energy to something that was truly profitable. Now I still love football, I no longer worship it. It leaves you with nothing, as all idols do.

We were created to worship, to give our full devotion to something that we highly admire. Now God says in his word that we were created for his glory. So we're not only created to worship, we are also commanded to worship and this is throughout the Old Testament. Listen to Exodus 23, "You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their sacred pillars in pieces. But you shall serve the LORD your God." That same word for "serve" is also translated "worship" at different times. This idea of worship, meaning service, it affects what you do with your life.

Listen to Deuteronomy 6:4-19 and I just want to overwhelm you with what the Scripture says about worship. It says, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." That might be another way of putting into words what it means to be a sacrifice, a body that is a living sacrifice. All of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your might. Nothing is left out of that and you're commanded by the Lord to do that.

"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead." Why? What's the point of all this? So that you don't forget. It's always in front of you. Do not forget that you were created and commanded to worship the Lord, your God.

"You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did

not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied," okay, so God's going to give you all kinds of great things that he promised you, verse 12, "then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth." Is it a big deal whether or not we worship God? Is that reasonable?

You see, worship is the standard of righteousness. Whether something is truly righteous or not depends on whether or not it is true worship of God and God decides what is right and wrong. God is not ruled by an arbitrary standard of righteousness. The law of God is not above God, God decides what is right and whatever he says is righteous and holy and good, and he rules over everything and he has created everything to worship him. That is its purpose and a failure to do that results in his wrath and judgment. You see, not worshiping God is the definition of wickedness. Do you see what he says? Okay, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and then to not do that but to give pieces of your heart to other idols is wickedness and he says he will destroy them for that unfaithfulness to him. He is a jealous God and you belong to him.

Verse 16, "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah. You should diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give your fathers." Okay, we've got it. Okay, yeah, we'll remember. No, they won't.

He needed to say this again in Deuteronomy 10:12, "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it." Jump down to verse 17, "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe." Verse 20, "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen."

You see, worship of God is shown by love, by fear of him, by obedience to what he has commanded. That is what worship is, that's what it looks like. It's not just sentimentality. It's not just singing. It's not just signing the doctrinal statement. It's not taking your idea of God and putting the Lord's name on it. You shall do what is right in his sight. He defines all of these things.

Deuteronomy 28:47 then says this, "Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you." Man, that's tough. That is harsh language. I mean, he says it's not enough simply to just do the sacrifices and go through the rituals, show up at the appointed feasts, stay away from the worst sins, he says that you have to do all of this with joy and a glad heart. Because they did not serve him with joy and a glad heart, he sends judgment upon them. Does it sound like something you can do? Does it sound like something that you can accomplish? Have you to this point in your life served the Lord in every way in joy and gladness, obeying him, valuing him, sacrificing for him?

Listen to what Joshua 24 says, verse 14, "'Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.' The people answered and said, 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.'" Verse 19, "Then Joshua said to the people, 'You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.'"

You guys know the story of Israel. Did they keep this promise to follow the Lord's commands? You know while Joshua was alive, they did okay. As soon as he passed on, you're into the book of Judges and everyone did what was right in his own eyes, following their own gods, establishing their own standards of righteousness and God kept bringing judgment upon them to turn them back.

And we could go over and over and over, I've got pages of Scripture, but I want you to look at Romans 1 now. Romans 1:18, a very familiar passage. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." And how is that unrighteousness shown? "Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the

in incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." So you see what they do, people are exposed to some level of truth about God, they reject that, they suppress that, and instead they exchange his glory for an image; they exchange his glory and decide to give glory, give worship, give devotion and service to something else, something in the created order. To football, I mean, how crazy is that? To exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for a statue of Vince Lombardi, he was a football coach. And other things. Their children. Prosperity. Wealth. Comfort and ease. And in order to do this, they've constructed systems of thought to rewrite the playbook of what righteousness is to justify themselves so that they didn't have to feel guilty about it.

Look at what it says going through here. So they exchanged the glory of God for these other things and what did God do? This is the reason for his wrath. "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever." Do you see that? The reason for the judgment of God is a failure to worship and serve him and rather, giving that worship and service to a created thing and so, then, God hands them over to the results of that, these degrading passions that are self-destructive.

"For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful," all the things that make life in a fallen world so miserable, these destructive relationships caused by people pursuing their lusts rather than serving the Creator, "and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." You see, they're rewriting the rules, giving approval to those that practice wickedness; those that serve other gods.

That's descriptive of the pagans, descriptive of people who are not exposed to the law of God, but lest you think that worship of God is simply acknowledging his word, look at this, chapter 2, verse 1, "Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things."

Look at what he says further down in chapter 2, verse 23, calling out the hypocrites. He says, "You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? For 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.'" You see,

God's glory, his honor, the worship of God is the standard by which all of this is judged and a failure to worship God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength is the reason that his wrath is coming.

Now I know next week, we're really going to get into the mercy of God, right? Before we get into the specifics of that, we need to stop and realize that this is still how righteousness and sin is defined so that we would have an accurate view of ourselves. An accurate view of your desires; of your decisions; of your actions. Is it to make us feel bad? Yeah, kind of, right? If you've got cancer, you need to know that so that the treatment will be appropriate; so that the appropriate measures will be taken.

Based on what all of this is saying, are any of us safe? Are any of us unscathed? Are any of us free from sin? Are any of us even close? Are any of us righteous? "No. There is none righteous; no, not one. There is none who do good. There are none who seek God. They have all turned aside and together they have become worthless." Man, that's hard to hear, isn't it? Worthless for what? You know, worth is defined, this microphone is designed to amplify my voice and if it doesn't do that, it's a worthless microphone. It's just an ugly earring.

You were designed to worship God. You were created to worship God. You have been commanded to worship God and all of creation screams, "Worship God! Worship God! Devote yourself to God! Serve God!" And this God is not a creature. He is not an animal. He is not a created thing. And yet we don't do it, and instead we lower the bar by comparing ourselves to one another. "Well, I'm not as bad as that guy. I must be okay."

We've got a friend whose mom was sent to prison because she stabbed her boyfriend and it wasn't for good reasons; it wasn't a justified situation. And you would think, "Oh, maybe that would shake her up, she's there in prison." Do you know what it did? There are a whole bunch of people in prison that are worse than her so she doesn't feel so bad about herself. We move the bar so that we feel like we can still be righteous to justify ourselves. We seek to establish our own righteousness rather than the righteousness of God.

So if this is true, there's no hope, right? I mean, if that's where it stops there's no hope. Listen to Jeremiah 31:31-34. It says, "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD. 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'"

Listen to Ezekiel 36, "Therefore I poured out My wrath on them," verse 18, "for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols. Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands.

According to their ways and their deeds I judged them. When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.' But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went. Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you."

What you could not do, God has promised to do, he has promised to accomplish. Not simply forgiveness, not only forgiveness but power to change. A new heart, a heart that actually loves God, that is his promise. His Spirit within you that will cause you to obey him, to follow him by your own will because it comes from your heart which he has changed. He has promised to do this. Praise God and in the end this was his plan all along so that no one may boast in his presence saying that, "I did this by my wisdom, by my might, by my strength, by my righteousness." God did it and he is worthy of all praise and honor and glory and blessing.

There is so much to be said and read but I feel that we just need to go to the Gospel to close this thing out. Look at Romans 3. We've already talked about how there are none righteous, there is no fear of God, verse 18. In verse 19, the law, "we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law," and this is the purpose that God gave his law, "so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." You can't change, you cannot even be forgiven by doing good deeds to overcome this.

Now I know that you know this but I want you to reconsider this, that you cannot make up for your sin by trying harder. You cannot pay for it by doing good deeds to balance it out. You saw what the standard was, all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, all of your strength, all the time. You can't do that for an hour. Do you know that saying? You can do anything for an hour, you can do anything for a minute, this is the one thing you can't.

The law, the purpose of God's law, the purpose of him showing you that was not so that you would be able to attain it but that so when you saw that law and you reached for it, you realized the massive chasm between you and actual righteousness; you were able to see the gigantic chasm between you and God and recognized that you have no hope but to cry out to him for forgiveness. The only way you can be saved is if somehow God does something. You can't even be saved simply by just knowing what's in the Bible. God has to do this. God has to make a way. God has to accomplish this change in your heart. He is the one that has to give you this new heart. You are hopeless apart from that and all the law does is give you that knowledge, that conscience, that sense that, "Wow, I really am wicked and deserving of his judgment." To truly confess your sins, that's what that means.

Confession of sin is not, "Well, yup, that was sin. Okay, sorry about that, God." That's not confession. Sorry about the voice. Confession is agreeing with this, that true righteousness is what God has defined it as and that my sin means that he reasonably should judge me, and the only reasonable thing that I could do is give my entire life to him and I can't do it without him. That's confession and otherwise I deserve judgment, I deserve hell truly. Not just as a matter of, that's not just the rules but I actually deserve it and I agree with that. That's confession of sin and that is what the law is meant.

Now verse 21. You can't be righteous by the law. You cannot be righteous by trying to obey the law. There is no power. You don't have the ability to do it. "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets." So the Old Testament made promises about this and we read some of that.

Verse 22, "even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe." Righteousness by faith in the only one who was able to live the law perfectly from conception to death. Christ, if you want to see what a living sacrifice looks like, look at his entire life. He lived his whole entire life as an offering to God. Every moment. Every word. Every thought. Every deed was to do the will of the Father so that he would be glorified. He lay down his glory. He lay down his comfort. He lay down the most amazing place to be, at the right hand of the Father, he lay that aside to live the life that you should have lived but were incapable of; to die the death that you should have died so that by faith alone in him you would be forgiven and in that forgiveness you are granted the Holy Spirit and a new heart that now begins to love him.

Look at this, "there is no distinction," the end of verse 22. Verse 23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Okay, they fall short of what he just talked about, the glory, the worship, the acknowledgment of his glory, the service of his glory. All have sinned and all fall short of that but, verse 24, "being justified," being made righteous, "as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation." That word "propitiation" simply means that his wrath was satisfied, the wrath that you deserved for failing every single moment of the day from the second that you come into existence. To worship him and rather worship and serve yourself in the creatures, the judgment that you were due because of that unfaithfulness,

that constant mountain of unfaithfulness, Christ by his death, he satisfied that judgment so that that judgment no longer is on your head. In his blood and through faith, this was to demonstrate his righteousness. This was to show that God was righteous. Why? Why does God's righteousness need to be defended here? "Because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed." He didn't bring the full wrath and judgment that was deserved. How could this righteous God not do this? It's because he was pouring it all out on Jesus Christ. He was saving it for that time.

Verse 26, "for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Verse 27, "Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith." That's your only hope. That is our only hope and that is by the mercy of God and the faithfulness, the faithful obedience of Jesus through his death.

If you believe that, then you're forgiven and the only reasonable thing to do now is to present your body as a sacrifice to God. That was your purpose in creation and it is the purpose of his mercy, is to take people who lived in rebellion, who did not love him, and to transform them into people who actually do worship him. And one day, and I had a whole bunch of stuff in the book of Revelation to read, but what he is doing is he is gathering worshipers, people who would worship him in spirit and in truth, around the throne so that we will sing his praises forever.

Let's close by returning to Romans 12. "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 [reasonable] service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [or complete]."

Let's pray.

Lord, we acknowledge that we have not loved you as you have deserved, we have not loved you as we were created to do, we have forsaken our first love, we have forsaken the God who made us, and yet by Christ's death and resurrection, you have made a way for us to be forgiven and set free. So Father, I pray that we would love you, though imperfect, that we would be devoted to you and out of gratitude and out of sheer logic, that we would devote everything to you. For your glory we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.