

## Reasonable Worship Part 2

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Man, I could sing that all day. I could sing that all day, Ted. Thank you so much. I know we always say this but you just cannot undervalue the music with words that bring glory to God and draw our hearts to sing his praise. I mean, seriously, I wish we could just keep singing. I wish we had 20 songs and we would just keep singing his praise, but we also get the privilege this morning to hear his word proclaimed, right, which fuels our singing. It fuels our knowledge. It gives meaning to these things. It gives life to these words so that it comes up out of our heart and just in exuberant praise for God. Life in the Spirit is not a dead one, it is not a boring one, it's not an academic one, it is full of vibrancy and fire and zeal. Sorry, I've got to let that go. We'll see this next week but one of the attitudes that comes out of understanding the mercies that God has had towards you is zeal and enthusiasm in the service and the worship of him. There is no higher calling than what we've been called to. There is no greater purpose and we serve no greater Master. There is nothing better out there than what we have and we can't even express it, we can't even grasp it, the Holy Spirit has to teach us in our heart to open our eyes to the great realities of these truths that belong to us and thank you for singing. That is a ministry. You singing to us, us singing to each other, that is a ministry. You minister to me and to your neighbor by singing exuberant praise to God. So thank you for singing. I wasn't planning to say that. I can't help it, guys. We serve an amazing God and, oh, that every day was Sunday and if I could take little capsules of this and remember it in the week, remember it as I start the day rather than turning to the things of this world and the depressing news and all of the hardships of life and remember these things throughout the day, how much greater joy would we have, how much more faithful would we be in his service. So let's strive for that. So thank you so much.

We need to pray. We need to ask God's help this morning because there is amazing truth that you need to grasp and I need to grasp and that truth is going to be communicated, yes, by his word but through a very imperfect instrument, but his Holy Spirit can use that. So let's beg him to help us this morning. Let's pray.

*Father, we come to you, we deeply desire that you would work in our hearts that we would see your glory; that we would see your majesty; that we would see your goodness; that we would recognize you, Father, and that it would impact us, God, that we would not forget it. So Lord, help us this morning. We come bearing many burdens, we come under the weight of suffering, we come under the weight of sin, our own and those*

*around us, we come under the burden of the toilsome labor that is the reality of this fallen world and we groan in that, Father, but you have given us grace and mercy and help and hope. So Lord, I pray this morning that our hearts would be attentive, that in spite of the weakness of the instrument, that our hearts would want to hear from you and be attuned to you and your word that you have given to us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Before we get into Romans 12, I just have a question for you. Think about this: what motivates you to sacrifice and to give up and to strive to work hard? What motivates you? Have you ever had a boss that you would just run through a wall for? Maybe a manager or a coach or a family member, just somebody that you would do anything for? That you would endure pain in order to please them? That you would strive and strain and sacrifice for? Think of that kind of a person. Maybe you haven't had that experience but for those of you that have, what was it about this person that inspired you, that caused you to want to do this for them?

I know for me, often it's someone who inspires me to reach for something higher, something greater, to push myself. It's someone who has uncompromising integrity. Someone that you can trust. Someone that you respect. But beyond that, that person listens to you. They understand the obstacles that you face, the struggles that you endure in whatever your role is, and they show patience with your weakness and they are compassionate not just in word but in deed. This person takes action and they bring out the best in you. You're a better person because of them. And they get their hands dirty with you, they don't just announce from on high what they want you to do. They get in the trenches with you. They're willing to endure in order to help you. They're willing to get dirty and to work hard themselves. They forgive you when you really mess up. When you really mess things up, they forgive you, they don't just destroy you. They empower you to grow, to change, and they celebrate your faithfulness and they make sacrifices for your good. This kind of leader empowers service and inspires sacrifice. You would do anything for someone like that.

What kind of a leader is God? He is exactly all of those things. Our God is exactly this kind of a leader. His standards are unimaginably high but he is completely trustworthy. He is full of integrity and goodness and he calls you to that standard, but he doesn't leave it there. He understands your groaning. He listens to your need. He is aware of the problems that you face and he cares. He has compassion for you. He feels for you. But it doesn't stop there. He has actually gotten his hands dirty and entered your world in order that he may help you and he has forgiven you and he has sacrificed for you. That is the kind of leader that we serve and it's this kind of leader that if you understand him and the more that you know him, you would do anything for. You would do anything for. You would endure any trial. You would follow any command. You would run through a hail of bullets for him. You would take a beating for him. You would run through a wall for him. You would climb a mountain for him. You would clean a toilet for him. And when it's for him, it is a joy.

Wives, when the Lord calls you to submit to your husband, it is not your husband you submit to but the Lord. Do it for him regardless of whether that guy deserves it or not. Husbands, lay down your life for your wives whether they respect you, whether they speak kindly to you or not, not because they deserve it but because God deserves it. Do it for him.

He is the kind of leader that is worth sacrificing everything for and today I want to highlight a particular characteristic of the Lord that motivates sacrifice. Please open up your Bibles to Romans 12 and we're going to read verse 1 again. It says, chapter 12, verse 1,

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.

As we discussed last week, Paul begs the Romans to give their entire self to serving God in worship. This is only reasonable and logical for them to do. As we said last time, the word for spiritual service of worship at the end there, the word for "spiritual" literally means "logical or reasonable." It doesn't really mean spiritual; it's not the best way to take it. It means reasonable, logical. Because God is the God that he is, it is only reasonable for you, only reasonable for you to give every shred of your life to God. And last week we talked about this logic of worship, what makes this so reasonable for him to make such an extreme demand on your life, and the first reason that it's reasonable is because worship is the purpose of our existence, a worship of God. Worship doesn't, again, doesn't just mean nice feelings towards God, it doesn't just mean singing to God, it involves extreme respect, fear, reverence, honor, devotion to, okay? It's one thing to respect somebody, it's a completely other thing to devote everything to that person. Worship is devotion. It's adoration. It is love. It is service. And it is obedience. You make sacrifices to what you worship and this is what you have been created for. You've been created for the very purpose that everything you do is an expression of worship to God and is a representation of God. You were created in the image of God so that you would represent him on the earth for his glory.

So it's reasonable for him to call you to worship because that is the purpose for which you were created. Secondly, it's reasonable because God has also commanded us to worship him alone. We saw this several times in the Old Testament, right? "You shall love Me with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength. You shall serve Me. You shall fear Me. You shall honor Me. You shall obey Me. And if you don't, you will be judged. If you follow idols, I will remove you from the land," speaking of the Israelites. God has commanded us to worship him alone.

The third thing about worship is that this is the standard by which we will be judged. Israel was promised judgment for failing to worship God, and remember when we looked at Romans 1 last week, that the big sin, the big sin was not deceit, homosexuality, lying, that wasn't the big sin, the big sin was the rejection of glory of God; the failure to acknowledge him as God; the failure to give thanks to him and, therefore, God in

judgment of them gave them over to the lusts that they desired, the things that they wanted more than God. Can you imagine that? People want their lusts more than the everlasting eternal God and so God grants them their wish as the first sign of judgment. The worship is the standard by which you will be judged. What do you worship? The standard is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your strength, all of your might, all of your mind, all the time. That's the standard of righteousness.

So wisdom and foolishness is rooted in what you worship. If you fear and love God, that is wisdom, that is the very beginning of wisdom. If you don't fear and love God, you haven't even taken the first step on the path of wisdom. You are automatically a fool. Righteousness and wickedness is defined by worship, what you worship, and as we saw last week, under this standard all human beings have fallen short of the glory of God and they stand to receive his righteous wrath, and the fact that that seems harsh to us, shows how steeped in sin we are.

Look at how one small sin has caused all of this trouble. Adam and Eve, all they did was eat a piece of fruit, but in eating that fruit, they failed to trust in God's goodness, in his righteousness, they failed to go to him for wisdom, they listened instead to their own desire and to the serpent, the enemy of God, and as a result of that one thing, the whole entire creation was infected with corruption. The smallest of sin is a big deal and that's why it has to be dealt with, it has to be judged. If God were not to judge sin in the ultimate sense, if he were not to deal with sin, if he were to just be nice to you, things would never change. If he were to just be nice to you and let you live forever, can you imagine how wicked this world would be, being filled with people that don't worship God and they just get better and better and better at sin for eternity. God has to deal with that because worship is a big deal and the failure to worship is the definition of wickedness and it is the root of wickedness.

So God who created all things, upholds all things, controls all things, is perfect in holiness, in majesty, in love, and in glory. He is worthy of worship. This God has commanded you to do what is right, to worship him, and think of his standards, what are his standards? Don't covet your neighbor's wife. Don't covet your neighbor's property. Don't steal. Don't kill. Don't commit adultery. Honor your parents. He's not an evil God, he is a good God and to love and to worship him is to love and to worship what is good, the very source of all that is good. We owe him our life simply by the fact that he is our Creator and yet we have rejected him. So to love and worship God is to have your head on straight. To love God is to love the truth; it is to love goodness; it is to love beauty; it is to love faithfulness; it is to love glory. That's what it means to love God. So to reject him is to reject all that is good and beautiful and righteous and faithful and glorious.

So based on this alone, it is reasonable for Paul to urge you to worship him. All of creation points us to this and no one has an excuse for not worshipping God. Simply by the created order, they should know that this God exists and he is worthy of worship and devotion to whatever extent that they have knowledge of him, and yet the knowledge they have, they do reject and instead they decide to worship animals; they decide to

worship man; they decide to worship mankind's ability, mankind's wisdom, mankind's righteousness, mankind's progress. You know, you hear this phrase thrown around a lot, "Come on, man, this is 2018, we should be better than this, right?" They have a wrong view of history. We're going backwards. We're not progressing upwards. We're not becoming more like God, we're becoming less like God and we're finding more and more sophisticated ways to reject him.

But God has also done something to show us how far off we are, he has sent the law of God in the Old Testament through his prophets so that you would know his standards. You know, it's one thing to logically deduce from creation that there's a God who is deserving of worship, it's another thing for that God to now reveal himself and say, "Here I am. I am the one true God. Worship Me and I'll prove it to you that I'm the one true God by dominating the most powerful nation on the earth, Egypt, and sending plagues on them that can be explained by no other phenomena other than that God has done this." And he identified himself and he is God and he says, "Here I am. Worship Me. The whole world will see this and will know that I am God." That is why God did this and he sent his law so that they would know what to do, but there is a problem, okay? So you see that there's a God in creation, he's obviously powerful, that God has been identified and he has given you his standard but there's a problem: you don't worship God, you can't worship God, and you won't worship God. You don't do it. Even if you wanted to, you can't because you're dead in sin. And even if you could, you wouldn't. You don't have the will to do it. That's called being dead in sin. The complete inability to worship God and to do what is truly righteous in his sight.

Now you might be able to do some nice acts of kindness, you might be able to stay faithful to your wife at least physically throughout your life, you might be able to avoid killing people, but you see, if you don't worship God, you have lived your whole life in rebellion and wickedness and you have set up your own standard of righteousness and you don't actually obey God's law because what does God's law say? It is not just don't commit adultery, and it is not just don't steal, and it is not just don't murder, it is do not covet in your heart. It's what you desire in your heart and if you have broken the law of covetousness, you're guilty of the whole thing. How? Look at this: if you have coveted your neighbor's property, in your heart you have stolen that. The desire and the disposition of your heart was to steal. If you have coveted your neighbor's wife, you have been unfaithful in your heart, you have been unfaithful to your wife. And if you have done all these things and coveted these things, in your heart you have been unfaithful to God, you have worshiped something else other than God, and you can't help it, and you don't want to help it apart from grace.

So what needs to happen here? What needs to happen? I mean, think about this, so you're fine, going along your path, living your life, and you know there are some things on your conscience that bother you, you know you're not perfect, you hear that all the time, but then someone brings the law of God to you, someone shows you the law of God and you go, "Yeah, that sounds good. I'll do that." Then you try to live that out and you realize you cannot live it out, what is your response to that? The faithful response? That one that is based in truth, the one that is not self-justifying, the right response to the law of God is

that you come to the end of yourself so that you cry out, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" When the law of God comes to bear on your soul and you see it and you see it in relation to who you are, that is the only right response, "I'm in trouble. I cannot fulfill this law."

The unrighteous response is to try to establish your own righteousness. It's to try to say, "Uh, you know, I don't think God really meant that. You know, I never killed anybody. I've never hurt anybody." That's the standard. "I'm better than average. We'll just kind of hopefully God grades on a curve," right? That is the unrighteous response to the law, to establish your own righteousness, to come up with your own righteousness, your own standard.

So what needs to happen? I mean, it's a pretty hopeless situation, right, being dead? Being dead in sin and not being able to fulfill this law that you will be judged by? What needs to happen? I mean, I'm preaching to the choir but we need to reconsider this, right? This needs to be in our mind. You need, first you need forgiveness. That wrath that rests over your head has got to be removed if there's to be any hope because I can't overcome this ever-growing mountain of sin. I can't sacrifice enough animals to keep up with it. There's not time in the day. There's not resources on earth to keep up with the sins of the world, let alone I don't have the resources to deal with my own sin. I need forgiveness.

Number 2, beyond this forgiveness, I need the power to do what is right. You see, if all you're looking for is forgiveness, you don't understand, you're still not understanding what's going on here; that your failure to worship God is true wickedness, it's true evil. It's not just some arbitrary standard kind of set up there to make you feel bad. It is there to make you feel bad, by the way, so that you would run to Christ. But still, what it means to be truly righteous is to love in the way that the law has called you to love; to worship God in the way that it's called you to worship God.

So I not only need forgiveness and when I have seen the wickedness that I've done and I'm broken by that, I realize I need the power to do what is right. I need strength. And number 3, I need hope that this struggle that we're dealing with will end; that it will not always be this way. If I am to live my life in worship of the Lord, I need forgiveness, I need power, and I need hope. Hope that I can change, yes, and hope that one day it's not going to be so hard.

In a word, you need mercy. You need mercy. You see, the mercy that is mentioned here, "by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice," it is not just that you would be forgiven of sin but it is God's pity and his compassion that moves him to action to deal with your need, to meet you at your point of need. So his mercy has accomplished your forgiveness but it has also accomplished the power that you need to change and it has purchased for you the hope that you need to endure. Mercy, then, is the motivation of our sacrifice, it is what drives our sacrifice, and it is what...well, and we'll explain more. How does this motivate sacrifice? It's God's mercy motivating our sacrifice.

So, first, the first way that it motivates our sacrifice is that his mercy has overcome wrath. God's mercy has overcome wrath. God has always been merciful. Look at Genesis 2. He says, "Don't eat of the tree or you will die." Genesis 3, they eat of the tree. But God allowed Adam to live for another 800 years until he died, and he allowed more sinners to be born in the process, and in that whole time, he had promised redemption. Then Israel was enslaved in Egypt and he was merciful to them there. He heard their complaint. He came to their aid. And in Exodus 33, why don't you go ahead and open there, Exodus 33:18.

Is it warm in here? Can we.... Everyone is falling asleep on me. I'm just going to choose to believe it's not me. Okay, even if it is, I understand.

Exodus 33:18, "Then Moses said, 'I pray You, show me Your glory!' And He said, 'I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.'" Those words are merciful and gracious, the same words that we use in our passage for mercy.

Verse 20, "But He said, 'You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!' Then the LORD said, 'Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.'"

Skip down to chapter 34, verse 5, "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD." I think that's Jesus literally standing there by him before he became a man, before he took on flesh. There are different points in the Old Testament where Jesus shows up as an angel of the Lord. I don't think this is metaphorical, I think this is Jesus standing on the mountain with Moses, just like the transfiguration.

"The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.'" You see, God has revealed himself to be compassionate, gracious, slow to anger. He is merciful and at the same time he will not leave the guilty unpunished. What a conundrum as we talked about last week, that for him to be gracious and still punish the guilty, Christ had to die in your place.

His mercy throughout the whole Old Testament is incredible because you see over and over and over again he promised judgment on Israel but he gave them so much time over and over and over, and it was 500 years of calling out to them. Once they had a kingdom, once King David was there and he left and, man, what a mess it was, over and over and

over the prophets called out to them for 500 years and finally the Lord sent them into judgment. He sent them to Babylon but he sent them there, as we saw last week, with promises that he would bring them back; he would restore them; he would forgive their iniquities.

This is the God that we serve and as we read this morning, he inaugurated and enacted those promises, those covenants when Jesus was born and John the Baptist going before him to proclaim the coming of the Lord in remembrance of his mercy, because he was compassionate and gracious towards us. He promised redemption. He promised these things and he became man in your place, lived the life you should have lived, died the death you should have died so that he could be a merciful and gracious high priest; so that he could understand what you go through and actually help.

And that mercy accomplished your forgiveness, it overcame the wrath of God, but that mercy does not only accomplish forgiveness, as we saw last week, you're made right with God by faith alone and what Christ has done but now this mercy of God, he overcomes your slavery to sin. He makes you alive to righteousness so that now though you once were dead in sin, now you are alive and you have the ability now to walk faithfully with God, to actually worship him truly; to actually do what is right. Now we know because we live in this flesh that it will not be perfect. The Scripture makes that clear. We live in fallen flesh but in the meantime, we have been empowered to leave behind these destructive sinful ways.

Look at Romans 6:1. This is after he's gotten done talking about the fact that it is by faith that people are saved, not by works of the law. The law can save no one. The law can justify no one and the law can sanctify no one. The law changes no one's heart. But now by faith you've been forgiven and now you've been set free from sin. Now listen to this, verse 1, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may abound? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Paul is dealing with an objection that is often brought up by the Jewish people following him around trying to stamp out his teaching, the doctrine of salvation by grace through Christ and not through the law, where salvation through Christ now means the law is set aside, you cannot obtain righteousness through the law and the Jewish people, and they called them Judaizers in Acts, the people that wanted to go around and follow Paul and make sure that the people that he preached to came back to the law, and even turn Christians back towards the law. That was their aim and their goal, and so they had objections to Paul's Gospel of faith, grace by faith, and their objection was, "Look, if you preach this, Paul, then people are just going to sin that grace may abound." And Paul defending that says, "May it never be!" And he goes on through the rest of the book to show how that should never be, that true righteous living by the people of God does not come about by the law but by faith, and he shows this.

"Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be!," verse 2, "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?." It is only by the death of Christ and by faith in him and by God's grace that you have died to sin, right? So now you are to no longer live



in it, verse 3, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" So all who believe in Jesus have been identified with him in his death. Okay? Verse 4, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order," okay, the purpose, purpose statement here, why was our old self crucified with him, "in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." He died so you would no longer be a slave to sin. This is part of his mercy, not just that you would no longer experience the consequences, not just so you would avoid the wrath, but so you would no longer be enslaved to these things; that now that you have a new heart, you hate these things and you no longer want to live in them and you no longer have to because you're no longer enslaved.

Verse 7, "for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God." Okay, so that's what Jesus, right, so Jesus died and when he died, he died to sin. When he was raised, he lives to God. So now even so, just like that, just like Jesus died to sin and now lives to God, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." This is a recurring theme in Romans, that what you do with your body, what do you do in this body, who are you presenting this body to as a sacrifice, as a slave, as a servant. In Romans 1, they presented their bodies for impurity. That's what they used it for. Now that you are dead to sin, you are to present your body as an instrument of righteousness. You are to present your body as a sacrifice living holy and acceptable, and now you can, and if you love God, that is good news because you want to.

Verse 14, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!" May it never be! "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification." And we could go on and on, and I mean, I choose to read big portions of Scripture because I think the force of that repetition and you see it there in Scripture not in an isolated verse and not cherry-picked cross references, but in a full

passage, this is a major emphasis of the book of Romans, that you're saved by grace alone through faith, and through that same grace and that same faith, you present your body as a sacrifice to God and you serve him by faith and by his grace and because of his mercy. Because of all that, you are able to do it. Praise God. You've been empowered for righteousness, not perfection, not yet, that's future, but you can put away adultery and murder and stealing and you can put away gossip and slander and all of those things, you can put them away.

His mercy has provided forgiveness, it has empowered righteousness, and third, it gives hope. Look at Romans 8:18, and I'm sticking in Romans because this is the context of our passage. This is driving towards Romans 12.

Romans 8:18. Chapter 7 explains how the law could never save or sanctify anyone, does not produce righteousness in anyone, and it is meant, instead, to drive you to Christ. It is meant, instead, that you would call out to God. The law could never make you righteous. But now, praise God, Romans 8:1, you are no longer condemned. There is now therefore no condemnation. Let me go ahead and read that. It's important. "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 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." What does it mean to walk according to the Spirit? It's synonymous with walking by faith, walking by faith as opposed to trusting in your own ability, your own strength, your own righteousness.

So we've been set free, we've been given the ability, there is now a war going on that Romans 8 talks about, how that you must by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the flesh, that is an ongoing battle, and now verse 18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Okay, so the creation is groaning, it is enslaved to corruption because mankind is corrupt, and now there is hope that when we are glorified, when we're given new bodies, when the whole creation is renewed, it will be set free from this.

Verse 22, "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves," don't we, "waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." Romans 7 really highlighted this, that our bodies are really the location of that war going on. We have the Spirit, we have desires to follow him, but sin dwells in our bodies and we have to fight it, and it is hard, and it is a struggle, and we groan in this, and it is right to groan, not grumble but groan, because it's tough.

Verse 24, "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it." He has given us hope, hope that we will be redeemed, that our bodies will be redeemed. Hope that this creation will be renewed. That was all enacted and worked out through the death of Christ. That is his mercy towards us.

So now that you have been given forgiveness, power to change, and hope to endure, knowing that you will not groan forever, some day we will be completely released, all of this motivates full sacrifice. God's mercy motivates sacrifice. He has done all of this by his mercy.

Look at Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Look at that, that encapsulates all of it. That encapsulates the whole thing, right? His grace has come. It brings salvation. It instructs us to deny ungodliness. It doesn't leave us where we're at but it changes us and we can live righteously and godly because we're looking to that hope, the appearing of our Savior, and the reason that he gave himself up for us was he was taking a people who were devoted to destruction, who were corrupt, who were worshiping themselves, their own lustful desires, and he is transforming those people into people who worship and serve the Creator; who are zealous, zealous for what is good. That is what pleases him and that is what he is doing with you. He is turning you into somebody who is actually zealous for what is good, for his good pleasure because you belong to him.

He is turning you into something that he delights in and as Philippians 1 says, what he has started, he will complete. He has started that work in you by faith and he will complete it and we look forward to that day when it is complete, when we do worship. And imagine this, imagine a heart that is fully devoted to God with no temptation to sin. Imagine a heart that is enraptured in love and affection for its Savior. Imagine a heart that always does what is right; a heart that does not covet; a heart that does not complain and grumble; a heart that does not hate; a heart that is not bitter; a heart that is not enslaved to addictions and lusts. And imagine being there with millions of people like that, to exalt the one in whose image we are being transformed into so that all glory and praise would be to Jesus Christ who will then, in turn, turn that glory over to the Father.

That is what his mercy has accomplished for you, it accomplishes the forgiveness, the power and the hope that you need and the purpose of that is that you would be what you were created to be, worshipers of God. I know I read a lot of Scripture and it's late now but if you have the opportunity, Luke 15:11-32, the prodigal son and what God has done for us. His mercy abounds.

So let me pray and let us devote ourselves completely to this merciful God who has accomplished everything for us. Let's pray.

*Lord, we draw near to you. You have been so merciful and kind and even though there is wrath, there is judgment on sin, you have been patient in desiring our repentance and you have allowed many wicked people to live and to have children so that we would eventually be here to believe in you, and your elect have been gathered throughout the ages and you have endured so much wickedness so that you could set your love on us. Lord Jesus, thank you. You are our mighty King. We praise you in your great name. Amen.*