

[TITLE SLIDE]

Thank you pastor Kevin for leading us in worshipping our Savior this morning through music.

This morning we are going to continue worshipping the LORD by studying and meditating upon **Romans chapter 12**.

If you do not have a Bible with you, simply raise your hand to receive a Bible this morning. You are welcome to take this Bible home as a gift, or just simply return it after the service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

It is a privilege for me to be here worshipping God with you all this morning! If you are joining us online I want to extend a very special welcome to you as well. For those online, you can use the links alongside the livestream for fill-in-the-blank sermon notes and the preaching manuscript.

Would you please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word, as I read from **Romans 12, verses 1-2**, in the English Standard Version:

"1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

This is the reading of God's Word. **Let's Pray Together.**

What's the first thing that pops into your mind when you hear the word "worship"? For some people the word might be "music." For others, the first word might be "Sunday," as in, they think that worship is something that happens on Sunday mornings at church.

There's nothing wrong with thinking that, but there is a problem if that's the only thing they think of when it comes to worship. If you think worshipping God only happens on Sunday, or if you think the only way to worship Him is through music and singing, then you are missing out on the full picture that the Bible presents.

But many of you already know that "Worship is a whole-person response to the revelation of God" because of pastor Kevin's teaching. Those of you in the youth ministry are learning about this with pastor Scott as you study the Psalms of Ascent.

Worship is not just a Sunday morning event, but a 24/7, 365 days/year event. It's not just done through music, but through everything we think, say, and do. It is not something compartmentalized and relegated to one place, time or part of our lives. For example, we cannot live in unrepentant sin and at the same time claim to worship God. That kind of worship is offensive to God.

Yet, even though we know this to be true, it's difficult to act on this knowledge. Because our bodies are still tainted by indwelling sin, we are constantly tempted to worship the things of this world. We can go through seasons when we find that our devotion is divided, and not wholly set on the Lord. But I want you to be encouraged and equipped by this passage.

Romans 12:1-2 is the perfect spiritual catalyst that can help stir the affections of our hearts for God so that the temptations of this world lose their allure and we give ours whole self to the LORD instead.

As we look at each of these verses, we are going to see how God's mercy compels us to worship Him.

[MAIN POINT SLIDE]

That's the main point of these two verses – **God's mercy compels us to worship Him with our whole life.**

Look at **verse 1**. *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

Paul signals a new section in his letter to the church in Rome with the word "therefore." Any time you see the word "therefore" when studying the Bible, it's important to remember that "therefore is *there for* a reason." It's a word that points backward in the text. It tells us that Paul is about to make a logical connection, a conclusion, based off of what he has just written. You could also interpret the word to say "in light of what I just said..." or "in light of everything I have said."

Look with me at what Paul just finished writing in **Romans 11:33-36**:

"33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."

This is what we refer to as “doxology” – it’s an eruption of praise and worship toward God. Paul is bursting at the seams after meditating on and writing about the merciful sovereignty of God in salvation, not just for Israel, which is what he was writing about in **chapters 9-11**, but for all Gentiles also, which is what he wrote about in **chapters 1-8**. This means that the “therefore” is ultimately pointing back to **Romans 1:18-11:36**. That’s a huge “therefore”!

Chapter 12 represents a big hinge-point in Paul’s letter. Paul is switching gears from talking about theology of the gospel to the commands of the gospel. He is switching from the indicatives, or the facts about what God has mercifully done through Jesus, to the imperatives, the things God commands. All of the commands Paul is about to give in **Romans 12-15** are contingent upon the indicative gospel truth in **Romans 1-11**.

We also know that Paul is looking back at all of this because he says in verse 1, *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God.”* Paul is pointing to the motivation and the means that enable us to live our whole lives in worship. He essentially is saying “in light of all the mercies that God has poured out on you,” worship God with your whole life.

Let me give you a quick high-altitude fly-over of the giant tidal wave that is the “mercies of God.”

[MERCIES OF GOD SLIDE]

First, despite our guilt and God’s understandable and just judgement,¹ we are now justified. Our sins are legally pardoned and removed in God’s courtroom, having been placed upon Jesus while on the cross, and we are declared righteous, having Jesus’ record of perfect righteousness reckoned to our account.² We are now reconciled with God³ and have received the gift of eternal life.⁴

We have a new identity – we are now united with Christ so that the power of sin is broken and we are able to live in obedience.⁵ We are also no longer under the demands and condemnation of the law (since they have been fulfilled in Christ), but are now under grace where we have the freedom⁶, desire, and ability to serve God from the heart.⁷

¹ Romans 1:18-3:20

² Romans 3:25; 4:7-8

³ Romans 5:10

⁴ Romans 5:12; 6:22-23

⁵ Romans 5:1-6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17

⁶ Galatians 5:23b

⁷ Romans 6:14-23, 7:6, 22

We have been adopted by God where we can now cry out to Him as our loving Father.⁸ He has evidenced this adoption through the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us,⁹ who helps us in our weakness and present sufferings and intercedes for us.¹⁰

God's mercy is poured out on us as He faithfully brings to completion the saving work He began by continually conforming us to the image of His Son¹¹ until we are fully glorified¹² in heaven – the glory of which is beyond all comparison to our present suffering.¹³

Paul's appeal to worship in light of the "mercies of God" has huge implications. First, it implies that our worship cannot be forced, but is only the natural response of experiencing God's mercy and grace in Jesus Christ.

Second, it implies that our ability to worship God with our whole lives, is only possible in light of the gospel. Another way to say it is, "the imperatives of scripture are only possible in light of the indicatives." As we meditate on the mercies of God, it motivates and empowers our worship. God's mercy compels us to respond with whole-life worship.

Like Paul at the end of **Romans 11**, when we meditate on the riches of God's mercy, it is only logical that our whole lives will erupt into worship. As my theology professor would say, "Paul's circuit breakers were popping."

Do the circuits of your heart pop when you think about the riches of God's mercy toward you? If they don't, then there are only two explanations: 1) You are not a believer and you are spiritually dead in your sins. Just a dead person cannot respond to stimulation from the world, you spiritually do not respond to stimulation from the gospel. You are like someone who visits the Grand Canyon or the Rocky Mountains and has no feeling whatsoever about the beauty present, because you are blind and can't see it.

But I want you to have hope. If you recognize your sinfulness and need for a Savior, then today is the day! God has sovereignly brought you to New Castle today so that you can hear the gospel. You cannot earn salvation by anything you do. You cannot save yourself.

⁸ Romans 8:14-17

⁹ Romans 8:9, 11

¹⁰ Romans 8:26

¹¹ Romans 8:29

¹² Romans 8:30

¹³ Romans 8:18

But if you confess your sins to Jesus,¹⁴ and ask Him to give a new heart,¹⁵ and eyes that can see,¹⁶ and trust that Him alone to save you through His work on the cross, then you will be saved. If you repent, or turn away from your sins and turn to Jesus in faith, then you too can experience the overwhelming mercy of God.¹⁷

The other reason why your circuits might not popping is because: 2) you are a believer, but you are struggling with your heart being fixed on earthly things and not living with your mind set on heavenly things. The treasures and concerns of this world have clouded your vision from beholding the glory of God. This happens to all of us at times, and we have to be on the alert for it.

It's in these moments that we become like someone who has traveled to the Grand Canyon or the Rocky Mountains, but is unaffected by their beauty because they refuse to get out of the car and look! You are wrapped up in the book you are reading, movie watching, video game playing, or some other activity that you won't give your attention to something far better! Everyone else is celebrating and talking about the beauty of the Grand Canyon, but you yourself don't understand why folks are making a big deal about it because you aren't actively looking.

But I want you to have hope in God's word written through Paul. Our worship is motivated by the indicatives of scripture – the person and promises of God.¹⁸ The indicatives must be there before the imperatives can follow. Jesus said in **John 14:15** *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*

Worship cannot come from a begrudging sense of paying God back or trying to remain within His grace.¹⁹ Worshipful living should never be motivated by the threat of discipline or loss of reward. The motivation and empowerment to worship God instead of the world comes from meditating on the mercies of God. The degree to which God's mercy penetrates your heart, will manifest itself in your worship.

In light of the avalanche of God's mercies, Paul makes an appeal to all believers in **verse 1** by addressing them as “brothers.” Though this has the full weight and authority of a command from an apostle, Paul uses a word that expresses a tender urging that comes from a human helper or counselor to his fellow believers.²⁰ Paul is lovingly encouraging us to act in light of the true inner desire of our regenerate hearts.

¹⁴ 1 John 1:9

¹⁵ John 3:1-8, 16

¹⁶ 1 Cor. 2:14

¹⁷ Mark 1:15

¹⁸ Romans 2:4

¹⁹ Romans 11:35

²⁰ Romans 15:30; Philemon 8-9

Paul urges us be compelled by God’s mercy to worship with our entire lives in two ways. The first way is to commit your entire body to serve God.

[COMMIT YOUR ENTIRE BODY TO SERVE GOD SLIDE]

He wrote in **verse 1**, *“present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”*

The word “present” was a term used in the context of a Levitical priest placing or sacrificing an offering on the altar as an act of worship.²¹ Paul purposely uses this word with its Old Testament imagery because all believers in the New Covenant are members of God’s holy priesthood.²² But since Jesus died on the cross as the final, once-for-all, sacrifice to atone for our sins, we do not need to sacrifice animals any more as an act of worship.²³ In the context of the New Covenant, this term “present” carries the idea of surrendering, yielding, or committing something to God as an act of worship.

It has already been assumed that, as a believer, you’ve already entrusted and committed your soul to Jesus. But to avoid any notion that worship is something that is only done internally or spiritually, Paul tells us to present our bodies to God in worship.

By using the term “bodies,” Paul is not referring to only our physical bodies, but all that encompasses our physical being – our mind, emotions, and will. God already owns and has transformed our inner man, but our soul has to reside in this body of flesh that is still the beachhead of sin.

While in their unredeemed state, our bodies are still stained by sinful thoughts and desires, and can be used to carry out those evil desires. This is why Paul talks about the war that goes on between his regenerate soul and the body of flesh.²⁴

Now even though we long to be freed from sin completely, Paul doesn’t want us to think our bodies are worthless pieces of junk that we just can’t wait to shed and get rid of. This is the way the Roman world thought during Paul’s time because of Greek philosophy. They saw the body as evil, but the soul as good.

²¹ Lk. 2:22; Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:28; Num. 16:9, Ps. 5:3 (LXX)

²² 1 Peter 2:9

²³ Hebrews 9:11-14, 26-28, 10:12-14

²⁴ Romans 7:22-23

Remember that in Genesis, God created man with a body and He viewed it as good.²⁵

God created our bodies to be used for His glory and to carry out His will through us in this world. It is with our mouths that we proclaim the gospel and praise God, it is with our eyes that we read God's Word, it is with our ears that we hear God's Word, it is with our hands and feet that we help others in God's name, and it is with our minds that we think about God.

And just because our bodies are tainted by the Fall and sin doesn't mean God will be done them once this life is over. Our souls will be reunited with our bodies at the resurrection, and they will be redeemed and glorified where we will continue to use them to serve the LORD in heaven.²⁶

Sin can reign in your bodies, but it does not have to since we are united in Christ. We don't have to present our bodies to be used for sinful purposes.²⁷ They are imperfect, but still useful. And this why Paul commands us to commit them sacrificially to God in service.

Chapters 12-15 in Romans explain all the various ways we should commit our entire bodies to serve God. God's mercy compels us to use our spiritual gifts to serve the church.²⁸ It compels us to love and serve one another in the church.²⁹ It compels us to respond supernaturally and serve those outside the church, even if they are our enemies.³⁰ God's mercy compels us to submit to our governing authorities.³¹ And finally, it compels us to love our Christian family in all its diversity by receiving one another with understanding.³²

At the end of **verse 1**, Paul says that our worship is to be "*a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*" These adjectives are descriptions of what makes your bodily service acceptable and pleasing to God.

The idea of your body being a "living sacrifice" is not to contrast your service to that of animal sacrifice since animals were alive at the time they were sacrificed.

²⁵ Genesis 1:26-27, 31

²⁶ Romans 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:35-49; Phil. 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18

²⁷ Romans 6:11-23

²⁸ Romans 12:3-8

²⁹ Romans 12:9-13

³⁰ Romans 12:14-21

³¹ Romans 13:1-7

³² Romans 13:8-15:7

The point is that you are to live in light of the new life you have been given. We are to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, and act accordingly.³³

Our service is to be “holy” which means “set apart” for distinct use. In Leviticus, certain tools were made “holy” which meant they were set apart for a singular use. You could not use the shovel meant for scooping ashes out of the altar for any other purpose. You could not use the table of the show bread for eating dinner off of. To do so would have been blasphemous to God. So too are our bodies to be used for service to God and not for service to our own pleasures and desires. Our worship is not acceptable to God if we are living in unrepentant sin.

To commit our entire bodies to God is our “spiritual worship.”

Here Paul uses another word for “worship” that just simply means “to serve.” It was used to refer to all the other ways Levitical priests served apart from animal sacrifices and how God wanted all of Israel to respond.³⁴

And while our service should certainly should be “spiritual,” the Greek word used here is where we get the word “logic” or “logical.” That’s why I prefer other translations that use the word “reasonable” instead. In light of God’s mercies, it is logical for believers to respond with their whole life this way. It’s not illogical for a believer not to respond this way! In fact, as one author put it:

“Christians who offer a living sacrifice of themselves usually do not consider it to be a sacrifice. And it is not a sacrifice in the common sense of losing something valuable. The only things we entirely give up for God – to be removed and destroyed – are sin and sinful things, which only bring us injury and death. But when we offer God the living sacrifice of ourselves, He does not destroy what we give Him but refines it and purifies it, not only for His glory but for our present and eternal good.”³⁵

But our ability to commit our entire bodies to serve God is dependent on our mind. The mind is where our new spiritual nature and our old human nature are intermixed. **That’s why the second way to worship with our whole life is to commit our entire mind to serve God.**

³³ Romans 6:11

³⁴ Deut. 10:12

³⁵ John F. MacArthur, Romans 9-16, 147.

[COMMIT YOUR ENTIRE MIND TO SERVE GOD SLIDE]

In **verse 2** Paul wrote, *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

This verse implies that our minds are always being molded by some external force. Whether we are aware of it or not, it’s happening. Both the negative and positive command are passive which means it’s something we allow to happen to us.

The term “world” is better rendered as “age” and refers to this present sinful age which is ruled by Satan.³⁶ The world and Satan are always trying to influence, or squeeze us into a mold, so that we act outwardly in such a way that does not match the inward reality of what God has done in our hearts. The mercy of God compels us to not be passively shaped by the temporary things of this world so that we look like the rest of the world in behavior, thoughts, and speech.

Instead, we are to be passively transformed which occurs when the Holy Spirit renews our mind.³⁷ The Greek term for “transform” is where we get the English word “metamorphosis.” It was used in the gospels to describe Jesus’ transfiguration and His face shone like the sun and His garments became white.³⁸ Just like Jesus was outwardly changed to reflect who He really was, so too are we to be transformed outwardly to reflect the reality of our new hearts.

The way this transformation happens is through the renewing of the mind. Outward transformation comes about by inner change. This renewing is brought about by the Holy Spirit as our minds are continually saturated by the Word of God.³⁹

As our minds are continually renewed, it results in positively experiencing and knowing what the will of God is and conforming our will to His. A transformed mind results in transformed living, and this kind of living is always good, and acceptable, and perfect to God. This implies that amount of time we spend exposing our hearts to God’s word, will be reflected in our mind and in our behavior. Though we are passive in the transformation process, we must be active in putting ourselves

³⁶ 2 Cor. 4:4

³⁷ Titus 3:5

³⁸ Matt. 17:2

³⁹ Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:18b-21; Col. 3:16-17

When we worship with our whole life, with our bodies and our minds, it will be evident in a vertical and a horizontal response. Our vertical response is directed toward God and the horizontal response is directed toward others.

[VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL RESPONSE SLIDE]

As we put off sin in our lives we are worshipping and responding vertically toward God by repenting of the sin,⁴⁰ because of godly sorrow,⁴¹ fear of the Lord,⁴² and love for Him.⁴³

We also respond vertically by relying upon God for the strength to obey and out of a desire to glorify him in our obedience.⁴⁴ We respond horizontally by having our minds renewed through the Scriptures,⁴⁵ putting on righteousness,⁴⁶ and seeking reconciliation where needed.⁴⁷

When we pray, we are worshipping and responding vertically by expressing a heart of dependence,⁴⁸ humility,⁴⁹ adoration,⁵⁰ confession,⁵¹ and thanksgiving.⁵² We respond horizontally by praying for ourselves,⁵³ interceding for our brothers and sisters,⁵⁴ praying for our enemies,⁵⁵ and by praying for those in authority.⁵⁶

[RESPONSE SLIDE]

Worshipping God with our entire life, with our bodies and our minds, is the only reasonable response to the mercies of God. We are compelled by the grace of God in our lives to do so. But it's also only possible to do this by the mercies of God. Just as pastor Kevin has been preaching on in Matthew 23, we need to be humbly dependent on God's mercy to do anything that is pleasing to Him.

⁴⁰ Mk. 1:15; Eph. 4:22

⁴¹ 2 Cor. 7:10-11

⁴² Prov. 8:13

⁴³ John 14:15

⁴⁴ John 15:5; Rom. 6:13; Phil. 2:12-13; Titus 2:5, 8, 10

⁴⁵ Eph. 4:23

⁴⁶ Eph. 4:24

⁴⁷ Matt. 5:23-24

⁴⁸ Matt. 6:7-13, 25-34

⁴⁹ 1 Peter 5:7-8

⁵⁰ Mat.t 6:9-10; Rom. 11:33-36, Col. 1:9-22

⁵¹ Ps. 51; 1 John 1:9

⁵² 1 Thess. 5:16-17; Heb. 13:15-16

⁵³ Matt. 6:11-13

⁵⁴ 1 Thess. 2:13, 3:10-13; 1 Tim. 2:1

⁵⁵ Matt. 5:44

⁵⁶ 1 Tim. 2:2

Our bodies and minds are continually under assault and influence to worship anything but God. So respond by putting yourself in a position where you can be compelled by God's mercy continually. We must repent of any idols that we worship instead of God. Anything that would hinder us from giving ourselves wholly to Him must be jettisoned. But this cannot be done in our own strength and by our own sheer will power. The temptations of this world will only lose their power when we see Christ as far more wondrous and supreme.⁵⁷ Though you cannot worship God with your whole life in your own strength, you also can't do it by being completely passive. Respond to God's mercies by immersing yourself in His Word⁵⁸ and by being with His people⁵⁹ so that your mind will be renewed and transformed, and your entire body be presented to God in worship.

[TITLE SLIDE]

⁵⁷ 2 Cor. 4:6

⁵⁸ 2 Tim. 3:16-17

⁵⁹ Heb. 10:24-25