

First Thing First: Worship

Romans 12:1

(black Bible page 947; Children's Bible page 1413)

Series introduction: *Healthy: Life & Church in Romans 12-16*

- Healthy is a great goal, for both an individual and a church. We will examine the end of Paul's letter to the Romans to see what this looks like.

Our passage today is one verse: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." Romans 12:1 (NIV)

- Every outline of the book of Romans recognizes this as a beginning of a new section. The deep theology of Romans 1-11 now turns to application in life and church.
- We will look at key words from this verse, starting with the last one ("worship").

[1] "worship"

- Before we talk about the church's mission (what we do), we need to talk about the church's identity (what we are): we are God's people, who worship Him.
- Worship is first of all for God, not ourselves. *This is the hardest part*, and yet the key to healthy life and church!
- Two senses of worship in the Bible:
 - In the narrow sense, *conscious* worship of God, like we do at church together (see Psalm 95:1-6, for instance)
 - In the broad sense, all of life should be worship, even if we aren't concentrating on Him at every particular moment (see our verse today, Rom 12:1). Worship 24/7/365.

[2] "Therefore" and "in view of God's mercy"

- *Therefore...?* Why should we worship? Because of everything Paul said in Romans 1-11, which emphasizes God's mercy upon sinners. "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8; also see 2:4)

[3] "living sacrifice"

- Old Testament sacrifices are usually dead!
- Note how important worship in the narrow sense (which we do on Sunday morning) is for helping us understand and stay committed to worship in the broad sense, 24/7/365.
- Two types of Old Testament worship:
 1. In the tabernacle/temple: tightly prescribed, bloody, atoning, and sometimes even dangerous – for God is Holy. (See Leviticus 1-6 and 10:1-3, for instance.)
 2. Otherwise, much worship in the Old Testament is not prescribed by God or loosely so, including song and dance, unscripted prayers, and more. (See Exodus 4:31 and many psalms.)
- Key thought: our worship might not look like what happened in the tabernacle/temple, but it is *if it is Christ-centered!* The tightly prescribed, bloody, atoning, and dangerous worship all pointed to what Jesus would do to bring us into God's presence. So we worship through Christ, entering into the Holy of Holies with confidence! (see Hebrews 7-10)

Thoughts on worship at a church like New Life:

- A facility question: can't we worship in a 7-Eleven?
- Sundays matter. We love Sundays!