# Bible Study — Romans 12:1-2

**Intro**: What is the first thing that comes to minds for you when you hear the word ‘worship’? How do you think our culture generally uses the word?

1. **Read Romans 12:1-2.** What motivation does Paul suggest should drive us to worship God? Can you think of ways that Paul has explained this principle in Romans so far?

God’s mercy.

‘Therefore’, definitely refers back to the main point of Rom 9-11 (see 11:30-32 as a summary).

But it almost certainly takes in the whole of the letter (And indeed, the Christian message!). While the word ‘mercy’ is not used, the concept is throughout Romans (e.g. Rom 3:21-24; 4:7-8; 5:1;6-8; 8:1-2, 31-32, etc)

When are you most aware of God’s mercy to you? When are you least likely to be mindful of it? What can you do to make sure you don’t take it for granted?

1. Why does Paul call for us to offer our ‘bodies’ as ‘living sacrifices’?

‘bodies’ – Worship isn’t just a mystical/spiritual thing... our changed hearts lead to changed actions. Thus, we worship by using our bodies because we can worship God with what we **do**.

Cf. Rom 6:11-13, 19 – using the parts of our bodies in worship of God is a natural thing once we have been freed from sin and are under the control of righteousness.

‘living sacrifices’ pickup the sacrificial language of the OT… whole burnt offerings were used to say to God that everything you have is at his disposal. A striking example of this is when Abraham is willing to offer his son, Isaac, as a whole burnt offering to God (Gen 22). This could be worth a read (or at least v2, 12).

‘living’ is an oxymoron with ‘sacrifice’ to indicate that this is an ongoing thing. WE continually offer all that we have in service/worship of God.

1. The phrase ‘Spiritual worship’ is literally ‘logical (or reasonable) service’. Why is the offering of our bodies a ‘logical’ thing to do? Does the word ‘service’ help you understand better what ‘worship’ looks like? How?

How else do you respond to a God who has given the life of his son to offer you (undeserved) mercy? What is an appropriate ‘thank you’? Surely it is everything we have/do? Hence logical/reasonable is the description of the link between mercy and our offering.

‘worship’ is used to translate a number of different words – in this case (as often) it is ‘service’ (with some connotations to the priestly service of the OT). We know what service is – we know how to do something for someone else, or with them in mind… and that is what we’re called to do here. We serve God in whatever way we are able; especially by being obedient to him (other places will call us ‘slaves’ of God in the way that we submit to his headship (e.g. Rom 6:18, 22).

1. What are the two imperatives (commands) in verse 2?

‘Do not conform’… and ‘be transformed’

What do you think it means to be transformed? (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18)

What does the renewing of our mind have to do with that? (Cf. Eph. 4:20-24)

Paul only uses ‘transform’ (lit. ‘metamorphous’) one other time – 2 Cor. 3:18. Clearly this is talking about an inner transformation, not just an outward one. It isn’t just about changing our actions (although that is included). It requires a transformed mind (and heart?) which will lead to changed behaviour.

Thus, we need renewed minds! We need the truth to reshape our minds so that we understand God’s mercy, and so that we can think about how to act in accordance. Eph 4 talks about hearing the truth, and having a ‘new attitude of your mind’ which is literally ‘be renewed in the spirit of your mind’. This new mind (transformed by hearing the Gospel, along with God’s Spirit at work) will lead us to act accordingly (i.e. in righteousness and holiness – Eph 4:24).

What are some areas where you easily conform to patterns of this age?

1. What do you think it means to ‘test and approve what God’s will is’?

‘test and approve’ is only one word in the original: lit. ‘prove’. But it can take on two aspects, and probably does – as translated: test/prove and approve.

So, ‘testing’ God’s will seems to be the idea so ‘discerning’ what God’s will is. And we get better at doing this as a) our minds are transformed by Word and Spirit to know God’s plans better; and b) as we obey God and experience the goodness of his ways, and thus get better at discerning his will in less clear circumstances.

The ‘approving’ is linked to that last bit ­– the more we obey and act in accordance with God’s will, the more we will value that, and ‘approve’ (=recognise) that God’s way is best!

Notice that we can’t just rely on ‘conscience’ to guide us… we need renewed minds. God also calls us to make real decisions – to exercise responsible freedom – in not conforming to the world, and by being transformed, and acting in accordance with God’s will.

Are there areas that you have recognised, through the experience of being obedient, that God’s way *is* good and beneficial (even if it may not have seemed obvious at first)?

Finish by praying in response to what you have learned.

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