

*When I was growing up in our local church in Goondiwindi, in the 1970's – this was the era when some **bold** moves were being made by **some** churches, to introduce some more modern contemporary music into their worship. Up until then, Church music had pretty much stayed the same since the 1800's. But now, these things called “**choruses**” were beginning to appear, and my-o-my, didn't **that** cause a ruckus...*

*When the Scripture in Song 'brown book' came out, and then the 'blue book' (products of the Renewal Movement in NZ of all places) and then the revolutionary 'yellow book', wow! – didn't it invigorate worship....*

*And if you didn't live through that era, you would probably find it quite difficult to believe, the angst and the arguments that churches had over:*

- *hymns vs. choruses*
- *piano vs. organ*

*And profoundly spiritual questions like:*

- *Could the piano be played for hymns? or only for choruses?*
- *Guitars in church?*
- *Drums? Drums aren't musical instruments. That's how Africans worship the devil....*

*And in our little church, I remember that the Elders and Parish Council decided that they would allow us to have 15 minutes of choruses, provided it was before the proper church service began.*

*And I remember asking one older gentleman, if he was going to come in time for the Choruses... and he said “I'm not coming to listen to Hillbilly's” ....*

*You young folk don't know how lucky you are, that this was all sorted out when I was a young fella, so now the music battles have been fought, and we can worship God with more modern music in church...*

*What's that you say? You want to introduce a few 'Heavy Metal' worship songs??? Are you crazy??? That's the devil's music....*

We're all the same, aren't we? In the modern church, we very often equate "worship" with "music". And we equate "good worship" (spiritual worship), with music that engages **me**... And if the music is touching me, then God must be touching me. And if the music isn't doing it for me, well **that** church obviously isn't spiritual – because **I'm** not engaging with God...

That is a picture of how shallow worship **can** become. And many people equate "good worship" with professional, concert-like experiences...

But, is that what worship is all about? ... Or is worship **more** than music? Is it prayer? Is it praise? Is it reading the Bible? Is it actually being taught **from** the Bible?

What **is real** worship? And if it's so tied up with good music, can a deaf person worship? And if you ask Robyn, she'll tell you that's not an academic question for me: I'm going deaf fast...

Jesus said, **John 4:<sup>23</sup> ... the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, ...**

Does anyone here, want to be a **true** worshipper???

Well, don't you think, "It's pretty important that we learn what it means to worship God in spirit and truth?"

The truth part's easy –

- Worship **must** begin with Jesus Christ (because He **is** the truth).
- **And** the God we worship, is the one true God, who is revealed in the Scriptures – not some image of God that we make up ourselves...

So many times, I've heard it said, "*I like to think God is like....*", and then they paint a picture of the sort of God they would **like** to worship. Do you know what that is? It's called, "Idolatry". They've designed a god for themselves, and it's not a **real** god at all. It's every bit as much "Idolatry" as if they'd carved an idol out of wood or stone.

The One True God is revealed to us, right there in the Bible.

- But to worship in truth also means that we shouldn't be false in our worship of God...
  - Don't pretend to be happy, if you're sad.
  - Don't tell God you love Him, unless you really do love Him.

- Don't sing a song of commitment or **pray** a prayer of commitment, unless you are truly committing yourself wholly and completely, to God.

Be true in your worship. I reckon God gets tired of a spiritual persona, that isn't real. (It's like when you put on your church clothes to come to church, you also put on a different 'you' – the religious you – the spiritual you... You become a different person, just for a few hours, on a Sunday...)

Don't be false with God.... You do realise, He can see right through it, hey???

Do you know what it means to worship God in Spirit and truth? Do you know what real worship is??? Well, Paul tells us this, right now... Right up until this point (in Romans), he's been explaining to us, the depth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: The grace; the mercy; the power of God to save; the adoption as God's sons.... He's been explaining: faith; and how God foreknew us, and chose us, and saves us...

And last week, we heard how **all** have been disobedient: **Israel** have been disobedient; The **Gentiles** have been disobedient, and so we **all** depend, **completely**, on the mercy of God...

And in the light of this – in view of this mercy of God, (Paul says) **I appeal to you...**, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

When I was preparing this message, I noticed that different versions of the Bible translated the end of this verse differently:

- ESV *which is your spiritual worship.*
- KJV *which is your reasonable service.*
- YLT *your intelligent service;*
- NIV *this is your spiritual act of worship.* (but with a footnote: *or; this is your reasonable act of worship*)
- The new NIV *this is your true and proper worship*

There's some big differences there – why do they vary so much?

Well, when I went to the Greek, I didn't find the word I was expecting. I was expecting to see the word "pneuma" which means "spirit"... But instead I found the word λογικὴν (logikēn) ... It stems from the word "Logos", meaning "word" or "Knowledge"...

And as I consulted Greek dictionaries, and learned more about this word "λογικὴν", (which only appears in the Bible twice), I realised Paul had found a word that brings spirit and truth together. Because it means "*intellectual, rational, reasonable*", but the Greek philosophers began to see this intellectual truth, as something which is "*spiritual*"<sup>i</sup>, and so the word "λογικὴν", can imply "spiritual" and "truth".

And so it brings the two words together. True worshippers worship in Spirit and Truth. This is your spiritual worship. This is your true worship. This is your proper worship.

Right back in Chapter 1, Paul painted a picture of the downwards spiral, of a world who had rejected God – and it was a picture of false worship and a corrupted mind... But now, by the mercy of God, for the disciples of Jesus Christ, that's all been reversed. And Christian worship, is reasonable worship – it's true worship – proper worship – spiritual worship. And it's possible, because of a renewed mind.

And what is true, spiritual worship? **to present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God**

We could have, what we feel to be, “the most amazing worship experience”, but God hates it, if it doesn't flow from an inner holiness, and out-lived righteousness...

It may not be worship at all, if it doesn't flow from an inner holiness, and out-lived righteousness...

And that's nothing new. God grows tired of His people, putting on an **act** of worship. No matter how real we may feel it is, worship is only an act – it's only pretend – if it doesn't flow from holiness.

There once was a time when God said through the Prophet Isaiah,

**Isaiah 1:**

**<sup>13</sup> Bring no more vain offerings;  
incense is an abomination to me.**

**New moon and Sabbath and the calling of  
convocations—**

I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

- <sup>14</sup> Your new moons and your appointed feasts  
my soul hates;  
they have become a burden to me;  
I am weary of bearing them.
- <sup>15</sup> When you spread out your hands,  
I will hide my eyes from you;  
even though you make many prayers,  
I will not listen;  
your hands are full of blood.
- <sup>16</sup> Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;  
remove the evil of your deeds from before my  
eyes;  
cease to do evil,  
<sup>17</sup> learn to do good;  
seek justice,  
correct oppression;  
bring justice to the fatherless,  
plead the widow's cause.
- <sup>18</sup> "Come now, let us reason together, says YHWH:  
though your sins are like scarlet,  
they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red like crimson,  
they shall become like wool.
- <sup>19</sup> If you are willing and obedient,  
you shall eat the good of the land;
- <sup>20</sup> but if you refuse and rebel,  
you shall be eaten by the sword;

for the mouth of YHWH has spoken."

God hates it – a solemn assembly – coming to worship, to tell Him how much we love Him, when our everyday lives, are filled with iniquity: When we don't seek Justice; when we **don't** care for the oppressed; or for widows; or the fatherless...

The kind of worship God wants, is: holiness; and righteousness; He wants us to **care** for the oppressed – for the least in society – for those who have no voice; He wants us to care for the widow and the fatherless...

Do you get this? As disciples of Jesus Christ, we should be living very differently to the rest of the world...

The ever-present temptation for Christians, is to be conformed to the world. The world hates it, when **anyone** doesn't conform... And all the world wants of us, is for **you and me**, to conform.

- Your mates might get drunk on the weekend, and they want you to do it too.
- The world pursues financial security, and a plump nest-egg for your retirement. And they want **that** to be **your** priority too.
- The world highly values health, wealth, and a long life. And even though God's priorities are very different to that, the world wants you to conform.
- The world has decided that an unborn baby has no right to live, if it inconveniences its mother... And the world wants you to be OK with that. It wants you to conform. And it will not allow any dissension on the matter. So



now, in many states of Australia, it's illegal to even speak against abortion, if it's done within a certain distance of a clinic.

- The world is in the process of changing the definition of marriage... And it just wants everyone to conform. It's like you're not even entitled to have a different view.

But we are **commanded** here, **not** to conform. True worship – spiritual worship, is holiness. How is that expressed? By not being conformed to the world.

Paul says, “I appeal to you”. It's an exhortation.... And when he says “**Do not be conformed**”, well, that's an imperative – You must NOT be conformed... It's not an option – He's not saying “you may not be conformed” or “you're mightn't be conformed to this world”... It's an imperative “You **MUST not** be conformed to this world”...

But **be transformed** – That's another imperative. **You must be transformed.**

Before you were saved, you were caught up in the downwards spiral of the world. In some measure, you **were** conformed to the world and its ways. It may have all seemed very normal and fitting and right... But not any more. You must be transformed, to seeing things through God's eyes – eyes of holiness and love...

This, my friends, is a radical transformation. The Greek word used for “be transformed”, is μεταμορφου̐σθε (metamorphousthe). From which we get our word “metamorphosis”, like a grub changing into a butterfly...

The world wants you to remain as a grub, and be conformed to a grubby world... But God wants to transform you into a thing of beauty.

So, how **are** we transformed? How do I make this radical shift, from being conformed to the world, to being **transformed**? How do I become this living sacrifice, which is holy and acceptable to God?

Well, first of all, I have to agree with God, that His way is right. And that requires a change in thinking – a shift in the mind.

Even though we're saved, we can still be very much influenced, by the thinking of the world. And for us to make headway – for us to grow in holiness, our mind has to go through this thing called “renewal”... If I have trouble seeing things from God's perspective, maybe I need to give to Him, my mind, and let Him renew my mind...

I believe the trouble is, for many of us, our minds, are the **last** part of ourselves we submit to God... I don't know why – maybe we're afraid – maybe we're afraid of **losing** our minds; Maybe we're afraid that others will see us as a “mindless religious nut”...

The Lord doesn't want you to **lose** your mind – He wants to **renew** your mind. He wants to shift your thinking, to become like His thinking. He wants to make your feelings, become like His feelings. But He won't do it, unless we let Him.

If I'm having trouble with transformation – if I'm having trouble seeing things from God's perspective, maybe my **mind** isn't being renewed...

There's lots of big moral and social issues, that people who claim to be Christians disagree on:

- Some might say “War is always wrong.” Others would say, “Sometimes war is right”.
- Some might say “When it comes to abortion, it should be about a mother's right to choose”. Others would say “Abortion is murder”
- Some might say “It's OK for Christians to date and marry non-Christians”. Others would say, “You shouldn't even consider it.”
- Some might say, “Homosexual relationships are a gift from God”. Others would say, “It's an abomination.”
- Some might say, “The death penalty is wrong”. Others would say, “It's God's design for justice”.

There are lots of big issues that people who claim to be Christians don't agree on. Does that mean God's mixed up? Does it mean that God doesn't reveal His will to us any more? No. I'll tell you what it means. It means that some are not rightly discerning the will of God, because their minds are not being renewed.

Douglas Moo says:

*Christians are to adjust their way of thinking about everything in accordance with the “newness” of their life in the Spirit (cf. 7:6). This “re-programming” of the mind does not take place overnight but is a lifelong*

*process by which our way of thinking is to resemble more and more the way **God** wants us to think.*

You see, to be transformed, is something that only God can do, as He renews our mind. But we have a part to play in this too. We've got to **want** it. We've got to **work** at it<sup>ii</sup>. And it's not going to all happen over night.

So it begins with a renewal of our mind. We begin seeing things from God's perspective. And then we can discern what God's will is. But in the Greek, that word "discern", it also means "agree". We have to agree with God's will. And so we let God's will reign in our lives.

When we agree that God's way **is good and acceptable and perfect**, that's when we actually embrace God's way, and live God's way.

So, that's worship: Being holy and transformed. Caring for others, as God cares for them. Agreeing that His way **is good and acceptable and perfect**... And so living by His way.

And when we are living sacrifices, that's when our times of coming together for worship, are really special. Don't ever get it into your head that we don't need to come together to worship. And we're going to hear more about that next week.

Over the next few weeks, we're going to begin to see what this sacrificial life looks like. Up until now in Romans, we've been learning about salvation. But now it's come to the point where the rubber hits the road for those who **are** saved. About

how we should live. About how we should be living  
sacrifices. ....

Questions?<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Brown, C., 1986. *New international dictionary of New Testament theology*.

<sup>ii</sup> “The tense of the verb is again present; and in this case the fact that the renewing of the mind is a continuing process justifies us in thinking that Paul uses this tense to stress the need for us to work constantly at our transformation.” Moo, D.J., 1996. *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

<sup>iii</sup> “Paul’s teaching about the Christian’s source for finding the moral will of God in this verse deserves attention. Paul has made clear earlier in the letter that the Christian no longer is to look to the OT law as a complete and authoritative guide for conduct (see Rom. 5:20; 6:14, 15; 7:4). What, Paul’s first readers and we ourselves today might ask, is to be put in its place? Paul answers: the renewed mind of the believer. Paul’s confidence in the mind of the Christian is the result of his understanding of the work of the Spirit, who is actively working to effect the renewal in thinking that Paul here assumes (cf. Rom. 8:4–9). And it is important to note that Paul’s confidence in our ability to determine right and wrong is not unbounded. He knows that the renewal of the mind is a process and that as long as we are in these bodies we need some revealed, objective standards against which to measure our behaviour. Hence Paul makes clear that Christians are not without “law,” but are under “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:19). This “law” has its heart in Jesus’ own teaching about the will of God, expanded and explicated by his appointed representatives, the apostles. But Paul’s vision, to which he calls us, is of Christians whose minds are so thoroughly renewed that we know from within, almost instinctively, what we are to do to please God in any given situation. We need “law”; but it would be to betray Paul’s call to us in these verses to substitute external commands for the continuing work of mind-renewal that is at the heart of God’s New Covenant work.” Moo, D.J., 1996. *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.