The Foundation Of Worship

Romans 12:1
*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

First Mention
- One of the foundational laws of biblical study is The Law of First Mention.
  - Essentially it states that since the whole bible has only one author,
    - that author knows the end from the beginning.
  - Before he ever begins to write,
    - he knows everything that he is going to say.
  - So, from the very beginning,
    - he structures the words that he writes
    - in a way that they forecast from the outset
      - everything that is to follow.
- Every serious student of the bible knows
  - that when you first encounter a new idea or concept in scripture
    - you can discern a lot from its setting and associations
      - about how the Bible is going to view that word or subject
        - throughout the entirety of scripture.
  - This only works by divine inspiration.
    - There may be many books that make up the bible
      - and they may have been written in many different periods of history
        - but there is only one author.
    - God moved upon men and they wrote under his inspiration.
  - Because of this, the way a word is used in Genesis
    - gives great insight into how that word will be used in the epistles.
  - God is the one telling the story
    - and he knows the whole story from the outset.
- For instance, the first prophecy in scripture
  - is mentioned in the third chapter of Genesis
    - and it foretells the coming of Jesus.
  - It establishes several key understandings
    - of how God uses prophecy.
  - First of all the first prophecy comes after the fall of man.
    - Subsequent prophecy will work in the same manner,
      - throughout scripture.
    - Prophets and prophecies will not come
      - during the normal state of affairs
    - but they will always show up
      - in the shadow of human failure,
• when things begin to break down
  • and judgment is coming.
  o Secondly, bible prophecy always points toward the redeemer.
    ▪ It doesn’t just forecast doom and despair.
    ▪ It always contains an element of hope.
  • The first mention of blood is the same.
    o It comes in Genesis 4, when Cain murders Abel.
      ▪ There is much to be learned from the utterance of God
        • when he said, "Thy brother’s blood crieth to me from the ground."
    o Abel was a shepherd.
      ▪ He was innocent,
        • but his brother despised him.
      ▪ He died a violent death
        • and afterwards his blood cried out to God!
    o We see a wonderful parallel there
      ▪ to the good shepherd
        • who was hated by his brethren
        • and crucified by violent, wicked men.
    o His blood, too cries out.
      ▪ Hebrews says that it speaks better things
        • than the blood of Abel.
    o We learn very quickly
      ▪ the incredible significance of blood
        • from that first mention of it in the word of God.
  • This evening, I want to draw your attention
    o to the first mention of the word worship.
      ▪ Worship is first mentioned in the 22nd chapter of Genesis.
    o Once again, the context is very important.
      ▪ The word worship is introduced to us by Abraham
        • as he and his precious son Isaac
        • are preparing to make the long lonely trek
          o up Mount Moriah.
    o God has called Abraham to do a very difficult thing.
      ▪ God has commanded him to take his son,
        • the hope of his future,
        • and offer him as a sacrifice to God.
    o Abraham has gathered the tools of sacrifice.
      ▪ He has the wood for the fire,
      ▪ the knife for shedding the blood
      ▪ and the ropes to bind the sacrifice to the altar.
    o On the third day of his journey
      ▪ he arrives at the foot of the mountain
        • and, as he transfers the wood
        • to the back of his promised son,
The Foundation Of Worship

O he tells the servants:
  ▪ You wait here.
    • The lad and I are going to yonder mountain...
      O to worship.
  • That’s the context in which God introduces worship.
    O We call it sacrifice.
      ▪ Abraham called it worship.
        • That tells us a lot about worship.
    O The first mention of worship,
      ▪ the foundational understanding of worship,
        • is drastically different from our conception
          O of what worship is.
    O When we say worship
      ▪ we think of a praise band,
        • we think of a group of singers
        • and a worship leader
          O that are singing joyful songs
            ▪ about the love of God.
    O That is not how Abraham perceived worship.
      ▪ As far as Abraham was concerned
        • worship was the act of giving God
          O the most precious thing in your life!
  • Abraham understood what God was asking of him.
    O Abraham realized that this was about
      ▪ so much more than his son.
    O Abraham understood that God was asking him
      ▪ to surrender everything to Him.
    O All of his hopes were invested in Isaac.
      ▪ His future was contained in that boy.
    O Everything that mattered to Abraham
      ▪ was walking in shoe leather beside him
        • that day as he started up the mountain.
    O And God required a sacrifice!
      ▪ Let me tell you something about Abraham,
        • he didn’t view it as a burdensome request,
        • he didn’t look at it as God overreaching his bounds,
        • he didn’t approach it as an obligatory gesture,
          O Abraham said the boy and I
            ▪ are going to go worship God!
  • Abraham had peace about the whole thing.
    O We don’t ever see him in a panic here.
      ▪ Had this happened earlier in his life,
        • we might have seen a different Abraham.
    O But at this point in his life,
      ▪ he has learned that he can trust God.
And Abraham knows that,
  - no matter what God requires from him,
    - God is going to keep his promise to him.

Abraham knows exactly what he’s getting ready to do.
  - He’s walking up that mountain to worship God.
    - He’s about to give God the most prized treasure in his life.
    - He’s about to demonstrate
      - in the most convincing way possible
      - that he worships God
        - and everything else in his life
        - is secondary to that.

To Abraham sacrifice was the most fundamental element of worship.
  - When you boiled it all down,
    - worship meant giving God
      - your very best!

**David’s Worship**

- Lets stay in the same geographic location,
  - there on that lonely hilltop called Mount Moriah,
    - but let’s fast forward through time
      - to a day that occurred over 600 years later.

David was the king of the nation of Israel,
  - the mighty nation that God promised to bring forth
    - out of the lineage of Abraham.

This day comes after David had been provoked by Satan
  - to number the children of Israel.

Essentially David put his confidence
  - in the strength of his armies
  - instead of the mighty power of his God
    - and God reacted by causing a great plague
      - to sweep through the land,
      - decimating David’s great army.

An angel of the Lord appeared beside a threshing floor
  - on the same mountain top
    - where Abraham offered Isaac
    - and began to bring judgment on the people of God.

- Once David understood his wrong,
  - once he realized what he had done,
    - under divine instruction,
      - he went to that threshing floor
        - to offer a sacrifice unto God.

He recognized that he needed to reestablish
  - the preeminence of God in his life
    - and the only way to do that
• was through true worship.
  o So David went to the threshing floor
    ▪ which was privately owned by an individual
      ▪ and when that man realized
      ▪ that his king wanted to offer a sacrifice
        o upon his threshing floor
    ▪ he offered to give David the land
      o that the threshing floor was on
      o as well as the threshing instruments for wood
      o and any animal that David might need
        ▪ for the sacrifice.
  o David’s response shows us
    ▪ that his view of worship
      ▪ was the same as Abraham’s.
  o David said,
    ▪ “No. I’m going to pay you what its is worth
      ▪ because I will not offer a burnt offering unto God
        o that didn’t cost me something.”
  o He said, “I came to worship.”
    ▪ This is about more than just stopping the hand of destruction.
      ▪ This is about reestablishing the fact
        ▪ that God is the Lord of my whole life.
    ▪ This is about sacrifice
      ▪ and I will not offer a cheap sacrifice unto God!
        ▪ I will not give God something
          o that isn’t precious unto me.
    ▪ On the same ground where Abraham offered Isaac,
      ▪ David recognized that the fundamental element of true worship is sacrifice
        ▪ and he said I will not make a cheap sacrifice unto God!
          o I’m not going to shortchange God.
          o I’m not looking for the easy way out.
          o I’m not interested in sidestepping
            ▪ the cost of sacrifice
            ▪ because I came to truly worship God.
    ▪ Other kings in Israel’s history would choose the easy road,
      ▪ other kings would make worship into an obligation,
        ▪ a duty that they despised.
          o But not David.
    ▪ David understood that sacrifice is the foundation of worship!
      ▪ He joined his voice with Abraham
        ▪ and said, “I’m going to give God my very best!”
  o I’m going to offer to God the treasures of my heart.
    ▪ I’m not going to hold anything back!
Foundation of Sacrifice

- A generation later, King Solomon would set out
  - to build a temple unto God,
    - a house of worship for God to dwell in.
  - And when he got ready to lay the foundation
    - of that much-anticipated temple,
      - do you know where he laid it?
  - He laid the foundations of the temple
    - on the same hallowed ground
      - where Abraham and David
        - established the true meaning of worship.
  - That temple was the centerpiece of worship in the Old Testament,
    - everything revolved around it.
  - Its glory was celebrated around the world
    - as the God of Abraham and David
      - was exalted above any other.
- What I want you to grasp, this evening,
  - is that the temple was built on land
    - that was legendary because of the sacrifices
      - that were made there.
  - The foundation of the temple was sacrifice.
    - The whole centerpiece of worship
      - was established on generations of sacrifice.
  - And for years to come,
    - the skies over Mount Moriah
      - would hang dark and heavy with the cloud of smoke
        - that rose from the burnt offerings
          - that were offered daily on the brazen altar.
  - That smoke would serve as a continual reminder
    - that worship is all about sacrifice!
      - The very act of worship would always
        - center around sacrifice.
        - The very act of worship would forever be perceived
          - as giving God your very best.
  - The lambs that went on that sacrificial fire
    - were the best that Israel had to offer.
      - They didn’t bring the sick and the lame to God,
        - they selected the very best that they had.
      - They offered to God the greatest of their treasures.

Living Sacrifice

- So when Paul addresses the subject of worship in the New Testament,
  - we shouldn’t be surprised at all
    - to find him talking about living sacrifices!
Paul’s view of worship was the same as Abraham’s, David’s and Solomon’s.
  - Worship is about sacrifice.

I want to do a brief exposition of Romans 12:1 to bring the point home.
  - But I’m going to approach this verse backwards.
    - The first point I want to make
      - comes from the last phrase of the verse.

Romans 12:1
I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

- Reasonable Service.
  - The proper interpretation of the Greek word
    - that is rendered as service in the KJV
      - is a subject of dispute among scholars.
    - The Greek word is a word that commonly refers to ritual worship
      - and is used in such a manner by Paul in other instances.
    - The dispute between the translation of the word as “service” as it is rendered in the KJV
      - and the translation of the word as “worship” as it is rendered in many modern translations
        - centers around the meaning of worship.
    - Some view worship as something that happens at church in a formal worship setting
      - and those who feel that way believe that worship is too restrictive of a translation
        - because, in their minds, it does not encompass
          - the other acts of Christian service
          - that take place in our day-to-day living.
    - This is the reason why the translation “service” was preferred by the translation committee
      - of the King James Version.
    - They lived in an age when worship was seen
      - as the stuff that goes on for a half hour in a church service
        - before the preaching of the word.
  - I believe that represents a fundamental misunderstanding of what worship is!
    - Worship is something you do with your whole life.
      - It is not limited to the half hour of singing
        - that takes place before the preaching.
    - Don’t misunderstand me,
      - church worship is important
        - and it must not be neglected,
          - it really does matter.
• But worship is a whole lot bigger
  • than what happens in church
    o on Sunday and Wednesday!
• Worship is a way of life.
• The problem with limiting worship
  o to a scheduled interlude on Sundays
    • is that it becomes an obligation.
  o When worship becomes a time slot in your busy schedule
    • or a performance that you have to participate in,
      • it becomes a chore.
      • It becomes another job that you do.
      • It becomes an obligatory effort,
        o something you do half-heartedly.
  o Your words praise him,
    • your music exalts him,
      • but your heart drifts away from him
    • because worship was never intended
      • to be a block of time on your calendar.
        o Worship is about your whole life.
        o Every element of Christian service is worship.
  o Everything that we do in our day-to-day living
    • should be worship unto God.
  o I submit to you tonight the humble truth
    • that service isn’t really service
      • until it becomes worship.
  o So the ESV renders the end of this verse as “spiritual worship.”
    • The NASB renders it “spiritual service of worship”
      • and the NIV renders it “proper worship.”
  o I want to underscore the fact
    • that Paul is talking about worship in this verse.
      • This is about worship!
• So how does Paul view worship:

Romans 12:1
I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

• Paul views worship as a Living Sacrifice!
  o Paul says that we should offer our bodies
    • as a living sacrifice unto God!
  o The word “sacrifice” that is used here
    • is the common word for the animal
      • or thing being offered up
      • in a ritual of worship.
  o The language of this verse is intended
• to invoke the imagery of Old Testament worship
  • and Paul is drawing a contrast
  • between the sacrifices that are offered in the Old Testament that die
  • and the sacrifice that is offered by the New Testament believer that continues to live.
  o Here we see the final application of Abraham’s view of worship.
    • Because the lad that he carried up that mountain
      • to be offered to God as a sacrifice didn’t die.
  o Abraham went so far as to place him on the altar,
    • to prepare the wood
      • and to draw back the knife.
  o He was so committed to the sacrifice
    • that the writer of Hebrews actually says
      • that Abraham received Isaac
        o back from the dead!
• By the wonderful mercies of God,
  o that which was offered as a sacrifice unto God,
    • in that first example of worship,
      • became, essentially, the first living sacrifice.
  o He walked back down that mountain
    • with a life that had literally
      • been given to him by God.
  o Likewise, Paul said,
    • “I am crucified with Christ:
      • nevertheless I live;
        • yet not I, but Christ liveth in me…”
  o Paul “no longer lives” in the sense that he controls his life.
    • He has taken up his cross;
    • he has denied himself;
    • he has given God his very best
      • and he now lives in Jesus Christ.
    • His life is a living sacrifice unto God!
• I’ve come to tell somebody in this house tonight
  o that worship is about more
    • than what we do in the brief moments of time
      • before the preaching.
  o Worship is about more
    • than a song you’ve sung a million times
      • that you could sing in your sleep.
  o Worship is about more
    • than just setting things on autopilot
      • and getting through another Sunday service.
  o Worship is about sacrifice.
    • Worship cannot be contained in single segment of time
The Foundation Of Worship

- on a Sunday afternoon.
  - Worship encompasses your whole life!

- God forbid that we allow ourselves to get to the place
  o where worship becomes an obligation.
    - Worship should be a lifestyle.
    - Worship should involve every part of our lives.
      - The life we live is not our own.
      - We were crucified with Christ.
  o We walked up that mountain to Calvary
    - with our very best offering in our hands
      - and we offered to God the treasure of our hearts
        o the most valuable thing in our lives
          - we offered ourselves to him.
  o And what should have died on that mountain of worship
    - was instead preserved by the grace of God.
      - When we walked down that mountain
        o we had life that was not our own.
    - We surrendered it all to Him.
      - But we received our life back from the dead
        o and Paul implores us to be careful
          - what we do with that life.
  o It was offered in sacrifice unto God
    - and it is still a sacrifice unto God.
  o So he says,
    - *I beseech you therefore, brethren,*
      - *by the mercies of God,*
      - *that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.*

Give Your Best

- What Paul is pleading with you to do is to give your very best to God.
  o That’s what worship meant to Abraham.
  o That’s what worship meant to David.
  o That’s what worship meant to Solomon.
  o And that’s what worship meant to Paul.
- It meant that you offer a living sacrifice unto God.
  o What does a living sacrifice look like?
    - It’s about eyes that refuse to look upon evil with pleasure.
    - It’s about tongues that refuse to participate in immoral conversation.
    - It’s about hands that refuse to become involved in sin of any type.
    - It’s about a life that is lived in worship unto God!
  o Hear what I’m telling you tonight:
    - The foundation of worship is sacrifice
      - and worship encompasses the whole of your life.
The Foundation Of Worship

- It’s about giving to God your very best
  - in everything you do,
  - everywhere you are,
    - no matter who is watching.
  - It’s about living for God!

- Paul said that we should present our bodies as living sacrifices.
  - Listen to your pastor tonight:
    - Worship is not just spiritual!
      - Worship involves your body.
  - Some translations attempt to diminish the strength of Paul’s words here
    - by translating this as “offer yourselves” to God.
      - A much more general kind of command.
  - But that’s not what Paul said.
    - Paul knows how to say “offer yourselves”
      - it is exactly what he said in Romans 6:13.
  - He is very capable of distinguishing that
    - from offering your bodies.
      - Paul means exactly what he said.
  - Worship is not just a bunch of spiritual stuff
    - that goes on in heavenly places.
      - You worship God with your physical body!
  - Listen to me:
    - It matters what you do.
    - It matters what you say.
    - It matters how you dress.
    - It matters where you go.
    - It matters what you watch and read and listen to.
    - It matters what you do with your physical body!

- Listen to how Paul says you should present your bodies:
  - Holy and acceptable unto God.
    - Holy basically means “set apart unto God.”
      - That is exactly what a sacrifice is.
      - It is something that is set apart unto God.
        - <<The Sacrificial Lamb was set apart>>
        - <<Our lives should reflect that reality>>
  - Paul says you should live your life
    - as if it has been set apart unto God.
  - We must set our bodies apart from the world
    - as an act of worship unto God.
      - Let me tell you:
        - Holiness still matters!

- Finally, the sacrifice of our bodies is described as “acceptable unto God.”
  - It is pleasing to God
    - when we separate ourselves from the world
and offer our lives as a sacrifice of worship unto Him.
  • When sacrifices were offered on the altars of the Old Testament
    ▪ the scripture testifies that they provided
    ▪ an aroma that was pleasing unto the Lord.
  • The smell of the burnt offering
    ▪ went up to heaven as a sweet smelling savor.
    • That’s the way our lives should be.
      ▪ They should be a continual sweet smelling offering unto God.
      ▪ Not just when we are here.
      ▪ Not just in the church.
    ▪ Everywhere we go and in everything we do!
      • Because worship is about giving your best to God!

Close
  • The words of the songwriter said:
    • The room grew still,
      ▪ As she made her way to Jesus,
    • She stumbles through the tears that made her blind
      ▪ She felt such pain
    • Some spoke in anger
      ▪ Heard folks whisper
    • There’s no place here for her kind
      ▪ Still on she came
    • Through the shame that flushed her face
      ▪ Until at last, she knelt before his feet
    • And though she spoke no words
      ▪ Everything she said was heard
    • As she poured her love for the Master
      ▪ From her box of alabaster
  • We tend to think of it as extraordinary worship.
    • Heaven views it as true worship.
      ▪ She gave her all.
      ▪ She gave that which was most valuable to her.
      ▪ She gave God her very best.
      ▪ It was a sacrifice.
      ▪ That is the foundation of worship!
  • Worship is never cheap.
    • Worship doesn’t come easy.
    • You can’t satisfy the charge to worship God in the discount section of life.
  • Worship is Sacrifice.
    • It’s going to cost you something.
    • It’s going to cost you everything.
      ▪ That’s exactly what God requires from you!
Application

- What about you?
  - What about your worship?
  - What about your life?
- Has worship become an obligation?
  - Has sacrifice become a meaningless ritual?

Romans 12:1

_I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service._