

# Responding to Mercy

by Jason Neil

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of responding to God's mercy and goodness by becoming a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.*

**Duration:** 55:33

**Scripture:** Psalm 101:3, Psalm 119:37, 1 Peter 2:16, Revelation 15:3

**Topics:** "Worship And Reverence", "Christian Living"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the greatness and marvelous works of the Lord, as mentioned in Revelation 15:3-4. The sermon then focuses on the proper response to God's goodness, highlighting the importance of worshiping and fearing Him. The preacher references Jeremiah 7:1-4 to highlight the need for reform and righteousness in the house of the Lord. The sermon concludes with a reminder from Romans 12, urging believers to present themselves as living sacrifices to God and live as servants of Him. The sermon emphasizes the need to reflect God's goodness in our lives and avoid engaging in immoral or worthless activities.

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## Transcript

The Lord put a lot on my heart this morning to share about how we should be responding to the Lord's mercy and to the Lord's righteousness and just the Lord's goodness, what our response should be like. You know, those of us who were in Chicago this last week really just experienced the Lord's goodness and it was just wonderful. And that first song we sang is like, wow, this is like perfect, you know, what a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms.

What a blessedness and what a peace is mine, leaning on the everlasting arms. Oh, how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way and it goes on and on. It's just great.

But we had a great fellowship and just experienced the joy of the Lord the last few days. And the Lord really just showed me a lot through that, like how we should then respond after witnessing the righteous acts of the Lord. And this scripture in Revelation that Joe just sang about, Revelation 15, 3 and 4, is just so appropriate, you know, it just says how great and marvelous the Lord's works are and just and true are all his ways.

And then the conclusion after considering these things, verse 4 is like, well, who wouldn't fear you? Who wouldn't worship you? Your righteous acts have been revealed. What's wrong with all the people who

don't worship God? How can you not worship God? And it's just amazing. That's the proper response to God's goodness.

We show love because he first loved us and we love each other and all the goodness that we have is just a reflection of God's goodness to us. Even Jesus said, you know, there is only one good, and that's the Father, you know, but Jesus just reflected his Father all day, every day. And wow, just reflecting God's goodness, how should we respond, serving such a wonderful and great God? You know, what a fellowship, what a joy divine.

We should just be leaning on God and just reflecting his grace and his joy, and wow. If we could start out this morning, let's look at Romans 11, Romans chapter 11. You know, sometimes we have experiences that are maybe a little more difficult to rejoice in, like being in prison for the Lord or whatever, various hardships that, you know, we really just are a little harder to rejoice in, but boy, I tell you, in Chicago it's really easy to rejoice in the Lord.

It was just amazing to see the Lord working in the lives of the young men that we met with and just the wholehearted devotion. And when you see the Lord transform some lives, you know, hearing the testimonies of these guys, I'm not going to go into great detail, we shared a lot the other night, but just hearing what the Lord has done and just totally changed, it's just really neat, you know, it's really neat to hear that, you know, because those of us who are his true children have experienced that too, just walking into depravity and just wickedness, and then just, bam, you know, getting changed by the Lord, becoming a new creation, and all things becoming new. And just to see that, even the fresh experience of that, and one of the guys, Pepe, you know, he's been walking with the Lord since like February, you know, just to see, and the other guys that, you know, they haven't known the Lord for 50 years or something, but they're just sold out to God, and it's just wonderful.

So the end of Romans 11, verses 33 through 36, it says, Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay Him? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

You know, it's just like, as you're reading through the book of Romans, those verses just kind of stick out of there, as like, I believe Paul's just writing and all of a sudden he's just, wow, the depths and the riches of God, you know, wow, it's pretty amazing, pretty marvelous, and just amazing, beyond description. His ways and His knowledge is just so high, and His judgments, unsearchable. And just concluding, wow, who has known the mind of the Lord? Who can really figure out the way God operates and understand every detail, and no one has ever given to God that God should repay Him? That just speaks of God's mercy.

The good things we receive from God aren't a reward or aren't a payback from something. Nobody has ever given to God to deserve anything good from His hand. Period.

Never. And just realizing that, wow, God is it. He is everything.

For Him, through Him, and from Him comes all things, it says. That's it. God is it.

He is the all in all. I mean, He is everything. And then continue, how should we respond? Wow, recognizing this, getting a glimpse of God's greatness.

What should we be like? And so Romans 12 continues. If we could just read the end of Romans 11 and then the beginning of 12 like there isn't a chapter separation that was inserted by some people earlier ago. Because it starts out, it says, I beseech you, therefore, therefore.

What's the therefore, therefore? It's therefore, it's there for the conclusion of chapter 11. Remembering just how great God is and how wonderful. He is everything.

I mean, through Him and to Him and for Him are everything. We don't deserve any good from His hand because He's not repaying us. And therefore, it says, by the mercies of God, Paul beseeches them that they present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. So therefore, in view of God's mercy, because of God's mercy, the natural response, the reasonable, rational response is just to, well, yield yourself to God. If you really understand that from Him and through Him and for Him are all things, you'll just, oh, yeah, I'm going to yield myself to Him since from Him and to Him and through Him are all things.

He's great and marvelous. He's so high. He's so far above us.

I'm just going to yield. I'm going to be a living sacrifice. It says it's your reasonable service at the end of verse 1. Some translations translate spiritual act of worship and things.

I was a little curious about that word reasonable and couldn't figure out really where spiritual came from because it means it's like Greek is *logicos* or something like that. It's logical, rational, reasonable. It's like the common sense conclusion.

If you really comprehend the greatness of God is to do this, be a living sacrifice. And we've looked at this verse a lot. And many of us have probably memorized that.

But it's got to be in view of God's mercy as a result of His goodness. You know, we can't just sit down with a checklist and go, oh, okay, I'm going to get renewed here in my mind and I'm going to do this because this verse says so. This needs to be in a response to God's mercy because of God's goodness.

And I think the reason why a lot of people don't do these two verses, Romans 12, 1 and 2, is because they have no understanding of the end of Romans 11 or the goodness of God. Because if they really understood God's goodness, they would submit to Him. They would give Him their all.

They would be a living sacrifice for Him. 1 Peter 2, maybe verse 2, it says to crave, desire that pure spiritual milk of the Word so you can grow thereby. If so be you've tasted that the Lord is good.

The result of tasting something good is you would like seconds and thirds. So if indeed we've tasted of the Lord's goodness, we're going to crave His Word. We're going to be renewed by His mind.

We're going to renew our mind by His mind. We're going to seek to have the mind of Christ. And so not conforming any longer to the pattern of this world, all of a sudden it doesn't become a hardship to do that.

Like 1 John 5 says these commands are not grievous, they're not burdensome. They're liberating the liberty of the children of God, the freedom not to be bound to these things anymore. And it's all in view of God's goodness.

Having an understanding, just experiencing the goodness of God. Saul on the road to Damascus, he couldn't be the same after he experienced God's goodness. He just couldn't.

It was impossible. I mean, he started facing death right away. Boom, boom, boom, boom.

I mean, immediately after his conversion, they're plotting to kill him. They let him down through a window or something like that. How's that for a babe in Christ, you know? I mean, just wow.

He's just going. And so in view of God's mercy, you know, Psalm 116 verse 12 says, How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me? How can I? But notice that's the thought of the psalmist here. I'd really like to repay God.

I know I can't. None of us in this room can even repay God for the goodness that he's shown to us. Nobody can.

So what can we do? Well, the only reasonable conclusion from all this is just to be a sacrifice for him. That doesn't cut it. I mean, that doesn't really match or repay him in any way.

It's just all we have. That's all we can do is just offer ourselves. That's it.

So it's not like we're even to be commended for that. You know, Jesus said in Luke somewhere that after you've done every single thing I've told you to do, after you've obeyed me fully, your reaction should be, well, we're only unprofitable servants. We're just servants.

We've only done our duty. But we're not going to have that mindset. Nobody will have that mindset if we don't understand the goodness of God.

Romans chapter 2 also speaks about God's kindness and God's goodness. Romans chapter 2 verse 4 says, Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? God's kindness, his goodness, his mercy, the revelation of who he is, leads us to repentance. It leads us to become living sacrifices.

That's what happens when somebody repents. They decide to become a living sacrifice for God. It's not this process of, well, I mean, how can you see God's goodness and keep some selfishness for yourself? That's not what the Bible says.

The reasonable response to God's kindness and goodness is to sacrifice yourself for him. That's what it says. And so here, showing contempt for God's kindness, God's goodness, really is just failing to offer yourself as a living sacrifice.

You're despising the riches of his kindness because his goodness, his kindness leads you to become a living sacrifice, leads you to repentance. From one time you're going your own way and later you turn around and you become God's servant, God's instrument for his glory. So one proper response to God's goodness is repentance.

It is the proper response. It is becoming a living sacrifice. And to do that, we need to have, to really live as living sacrifices.

It's imperative. You've got to understand God's goodness. You've got to understand just how great God is.

You've got to have an accurate picture of God and then an accurate picture of yourself. Luke 3, you know, God in his richness, in his mercy, in his loving kindness, he prepared people for the coming of his Son. He did.

He prepared them. He said, well, gee, I'm going to send my Son, the Lord Jesus Christ here, and I've got to send a messenger to prepare his way before him. And this was John the Baptist.

And so in Luke 3, we get a glimpse of what kind of things John told the people to prepare them for Christ. Now, John told the people how great Christ was. Okay, I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals.

He's going to be baptizing you with the Holy Spirit. And he's got his winnowing fork and all these great things that he said about God. But you know what? He also gave the crowds an accurate picture of themselves.

And in verse 7, as John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, and he said, you brood of vipers. Oh, brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? And then what does he say? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Change your lives. Become a living sacrifice. Don't think, don't even start to say to yourself, oh, we've got Abraham as our father.

We're good people. Don't even go there, he says. For I tell you that out of these stones, God can raise up children for Abraham.

The proper way to see yourself is a brood of vipers. Wicked people. Wretched.

So we sing that song, Amazing Grace, that saved a wretch like me, right? So we are unworthy. And when we understand both those things and have an accurate picture of who we are and who God is, now I add the picture, not only the goodness of God, but who we are. Add that to the picture here, and then we see how much more reasonable it is to become a living sacrifice.

Not only how good God is, but how wretched and miserable, sinful we were. But while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Wow.

We were sinners. Christ died for us. Goodness and wretchedness.

What's the way out here? It's to reconcile the two. Repentance, living sacrifice. Join God's team, if you will.

2 Corinthians chapter 5. Just another scripture that talks about our response to the love and mercy of God. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 14 and 15. It says, For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again. Well, there we have it right there. Again, it talks about not living for self, living for Him.

That's why He died. That was the purpose. So we have stopped living for ourselves, become a living sacrifice, wholly set apart to do His will.

That's why He came. And look in verse 14. It says, Christ's love compels us.

Some translations read constrains us. I was really interested in that word. And I looked it up and got a better meaning of the Greek word.

And it just means, the literal word is to arrest, like you're arresting a prisoner. That's kind of neat. Figuratively, it means to compel, perplex, preoccupy.

So in other words, we are so preoccupied and just amazed, blown away, perplexed by God's love, that it's like we've been arrested by His love and we can't do anything else in response. We're like a prisoner of Christ's love and just loving to be there. That's really what it's like.

The same word compel was used in Luke 8:37, after the demon-possessed man in the garrisons was healed and the people were overcome, it says, with fear, and they didn't want Christ there. They were overcome with fear. Overcome is the same word in Greek as compel.

So picture that. I mean, we are overcome by Christ's love. I mean, we are just so deeply persuaded that this is how we react.

We stop living for ourselves and we live for Him. And again, I'm convinced that those who still live for themselves have not tasted of the love of Christ. They have not experienced that goodness.

If they had, what would their life be like? They've either outright rejected the goodness of God, they choose to ignore it, or they deceive themselves, whatever, but they are not experiencing the goodness of God because if they were, their lives would reflect it by being a living sacrifice. This is reiterated in 1 Peter 4, 1-2. 1 Peter 4, 1-2 says, Therefore, since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude.

I don't know what it's saying there. Since Christ suffered in His body, the natural response is to... Maybe I shouldn't use the word natural. The reasonable response is to arm yourselves with that same attitude.

Why? Because he who suffered in the body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God, just like we read in 2 Corinthians 5 just a minute ago. I'd like to read this in the New Living Translation.

It's pretty neat. It says, So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude He had and be ready to suffer too. For if you are willing to suffer for Christ, you've decided to stop sinning.

And you won't spend the rest of your life chasing after evil desires, but you'll be anxious to do the will of God. Anxious, eager to do the will of God. So therefore, in view of God's mercy, because Christ suffered, arm yourselves.

Get that same mind. Get that same attitude. Maybe we can turn over to 1 Peter 2. 1 Peter 2, starting in verse 10.

Now, this passage gives us some practical applications of what it's like to be a living sacrifice. You know, we've talked this morning about the proper response to God's mercy and just being a living sacrifice. Well, how does that carry out in our daily walk? What practical examples is there for us to pattern ourselves after in Scripture? And this Scripture gives us some, starting in maybe verse 10.

It says, Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. There's mercy again, okay? We've received the mercy, the goodness of God.

Again, the response, Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans, that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. There's a response to having received God's mercy.

Now, Peter's writing here and he's saying, you know, live such a good life. And we're not going to do that, with our souls in this world, foolish among these people. Among the people.

Okay, we are in the world, we're not of the world. Okay, so other people are going to see our lives here. Verse 13 says, Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men, whether to the King as the supreme authority or to governors who are sent by Him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

There's the authorities. We can submit ourselves to the authorities. That's one practical aspect.

We're not going to try to skirt around the law. A lot of people try to do that. We're going to obey the laws that are set up for us.

Why? One of the reasons is we're going to live such a good life, we're so above reproach that other people can see our good deeds. Even Jesus advocated paying tax to the Romans' government. Then in verse 15 it says, For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.

Now this is God's will we're talking about here. We know that in Matthew 7.21 Jesus says, No, not the people who just call me Lord, Lord. Not everybody who calls me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father.

So this is God's will it says here. Pretty important stuff. So it's God's will that by doing good.

So all embedded in these verses we've got God's will and we've got some instruction on how to do good. First practical concrete thing we came to is to submit to the authorities. It says, Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil.

Live as servants of God. That sounds familiar, kind of sounds like a living sacrifice. It says, Show proper respect to everyone.

Love the brotherhood of believers. Fear God. Honor the king.

Be respectful to people. We're going to get something interesting in verse 18. Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

Wow. Now that's an interesting thing. Submit to your masters, slaves, even to the harsh ones.

Wait a minute, I could serve God much better if I just ran away. No, that wouldn't be living such a good life among these pagans. That though they accuse you of doing wrong, they can't help but glorify God on the day he visits us.

Instead, Peter's advice is just submit. What kind of testimony do you think that is? When you submit, well, we'll find out what it says. It says, For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.

Again, conscious of God. You have God's goodness. You're being conscious of how great God is.

But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable for God. And then verse 21 says, To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth.

So these slaves here that Paul's writing to really had a unique opportunity to suffer unjustly. You know, and we can apply this today to maybe employees and employers. You know, talking, a lot of teachers, other teachers at work really sometimes talk not so good about the principles or administration and different policies and procedures.

And you know what happens at work is that we have one principal, two assistant principals. They're under superintendent and assistant two superintendents, and they're under the governor and, you know, all this kind of stuff. Well, what happens is that the building principal say, hey, I want everybody to do this, do this certain principle, stay outside your doors between passing time.

Some people do it. Some people don't. We have different policies.

The principal say, I'd like you to follow this procedure for giving students passes to use the bathroom. Some people do it. Some people don't.

I follow the policy. And so when I follow the policy, hey, I've got to fill out your pass in your planner there. Get it out so I can sign it.

Oh, no, Mr. So-and-so doesn't make us. Mr. So-and-so doesn't make us. Wow, does that make for an inefficient operation of a school or what? So we can take that and look at when our employers tell us to do something, we can all just do it and everybody's good.

Everybody's the better off for it, and we'll be living such a good life that people will end up glorifying God because of us. In Ephesians 6, verse 6 kind of reiterates the same thing about slaves and masters, and I'd apply it. Obviously, none of us in this room are literally slaves and masters, but we do have obligations to fulfill.

A lot of us have employers. Not all of us. Some of us are self-employed, but still need to be faithful to your responsibilities.

Ephesians 6, verse 5 says, Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them, not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. There's the will of God again.

Doing the will of God from the heart. Matthew 12, verse 50 says, Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother, sister, and mother, doing the will of God. So 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 18 says, Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

It's the will of God for you is to give thanks in all circumstances. And I guess after reading 1 Peter, we can say especially when you're being treated unjustly. Because that's commendable before God.

As I was looking at these things, I thought about forsaking all. Luke 14, verse 33 says, Jesus is speaking and he says, Any of you, you want to be my disciples, you've got to forsake all you have. Period.

That's it. You've got to. If you don't, you can't be my disciple.

And that's really what we've been talking about, right? Being a living sacrifice. How can you be selfish, keep stuff for yourself if you're somebody else's slave? If you've sacrificed yourself for God. That doesn't really make too much sense.

So of course Jesus would say, you've got to forsake all you have. So all people are called to forsake all. And we saw some great examples of that when we were in Chicago the last few days.

These guys had forsaken all. A couple of them, both guys named Chris, had just stopped going to college and they just forsook all. And they really, literally and physically just stopped doing a lot of things.

And Justin at the University of Southern California forsook all, but he stayed in college. And he continued to go to college to the glory of God. It was crucifying his heart though, just like it was crucified in Chris' life too.

So we see in the scripture, we see that some people, everybody forsakes all, forsakes everything. But not everybody forsakes everything physically. It's all crucified in our hearts.

But for example, most of us in this room, I think all of us have a house. We have not left our houses and we don't live on the street corner now to serve God. But we better have our houses crucified in our heart, forsaken.

So that if it burnt down, we can rejoice. If God called us to go to the street, we can give thanks and all that, all the circumstances, even that one. The example from scripture, we don't want to justify our lives just because we've done it.

But the example from scripture, some people are called to forsake, physically forsake houses, lands, families, whatever, for the kingdom of God. Some people weren't. They're all required.

Everybody, Jesus said in Luke 14.33, had to forsake everything, but not all physically. Everything had to be crucified in your heart. And so the example, there's lots of examples from this, but we all are familiar with the rich young ruler.

In Matthew 19.21, the rich young ruler was told, he kept all God's commandments, he said, and all this stuff. And Jesus said, you lack one thing. I want you to sell your possessions, leave your home, give it all to the poor, and then come follow me.

So in coming to follow me, you've left your home, you've left everything, you've physically gotten rid of everything, and you're going to come follow me. The man from the Gerasenes, I mentioned him earlier in Luke 8.39, he was healed, or Jesus cast out two demons, and he said, Lord, I'll follow you anywhere. It's gone.

He forsook all. It's crucified in his heart, and Jesus says, no, go back home. Go to your home.

Now here he is trying to physically forsake his home and his homeland, but Jesus said, no, I want you there. I understand it's crucified in your heart, but you're going to be there, because I want you to tell what

God's done for you. That's just one example from Scripture, or a couple examples from Scripture.

Everybody, hopefully that's clear, everybody needs to forsake everything in their heart. Crucify it all. It's gone.

How that manifests itself physically is up to the will of God. So then we've got a couple pitfalls that people fall into. Some people would just as soon forsake some outward things, or get some outward things right.

Make it look good on the outside, but they haven't forsaken all in their heart. Now, what they do on the outside might make it look pretty good. They might be able to fool some men, but they won't fool God, because God says, forsake all.

So some people give up lots of stuff. Jesus says in Matthew 23 that some people travel over land and sea to win only one convert, but then they make them twice as much a son of hell as they are, because they're not sold out to God. So God isn't only interested in physical sacrifices.

He wants, first of all, our heart to be fully submitted. So some people don't take heed of that, and think that they can hold back places in their heart reserved for themselves, and yet they've given up seemingly so much for God. Isaiah chapter 1 talks to such people.

So maybe these people, I like to spend a lot of time in prayer. Oh, I spend hours in prayer every day, they might say. But you know what? If their heart's not right with God, if they haven't forsaken all in their heart, God doesn't even hear their prayer.

Isaiah chapter 1, starting in verse 15. He says, when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you. Even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.

Why not? It says your hands are full of blood. Wash and make yourselves clean. Repent.

Be a living sacrifice. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing wrong, all of it.

Learn to do right. Seek justice. Encourage the oppressed.

And he goes on and talks about some things that they need to reform. But that shows you right there, prayer doesn't do it. You might be forsaking time or something to go pray.

If it's merely outward and physical, and not in your heart, if you haven't forsaken all in your heart, if you're not that living sacrifice, if you haven't responded to God's mercy, God's goodness, in a reasonable way, and you just want to respond with offering lots of prayers, even if you offer many prayers, God says he's not going to listen. Oh, but maybe I'll be a worship leader in my church, or I'll be in the choir. Let's look at Amos chapter 5. Amos chapter 5, verse 23.

God is speaking through the prophet Amos, and God says, away with the noise of your songs. I will not listen to the music of your harps, but let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream. Continual, complete righteousness is what God wants.

He wants you to love him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. He doesn't want you to sing songs if you're not right with him. And so Amos says, well, God says, away with the noise of your songs.

It's noise. Ah, I can't stand it. I think about that on Sunday mornings.

When we're singing to God, or Friday nights, whenever we sing, I often think about, wow, right now there's probably other people singing to God, and God's just saying, stop. Don't sing anymore. I'm just thankful that, you know, as we can have fully submitted hearts to God, that God can be pleased with our songs.

He delights in the songs of his saints, but with some people he's like, no, no, stop the worthless singing. Maybe if I read my Bible more, that will make me right with God. Well, only if you take heed to it.

Only if you respond to his mercy by becoming a living sacrifice. Let's look at Psalm 50. So some people resort to, oh, I pray a lot.

I'm in the church choir. I read my Bible a lot, maybe. Well, in Psalm 50, verse 16, it says, But to the wicked, God says, what right have you to recite my laws, or take my covenant on your lips? You hate my instruction, and cast my words behind you.

Can you imagine that? I mean, you'd think it's pretty nice to recite God's words, and read them, and what God's actually saying to some people, what are you doing this for? You're not listening. You haven't even responded to what you've read. Maybe we could turn over to Jeremiah chapter 7. So we don't want to put our confidence in these things.

We don't want to examine our outward looks, and how we're doing things. We want to examine the heart. God looks at the heart.

And so in Jeremiah chapter 7, there's some people that are trusting in the temple. Oh, I worship at the temple, they say. God says it's deceptive to trust in the temple.

It's deceptive to trust in your church. It would be deceptive to trust in this fellowship. Jeremiah 7, verse 4. Well, maybe we could do verse 2. Let's start in the beginning of the chapter.

Verse 1 of Jeremiah 7. So this is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord. Stand at the gate of the Lord's house, and there proclaim this message. Unfortunately, the Lord's house has become a place at the gate of the house where we need some preachers.

Because they're just like these people in Jeremiah. It says, hear the word of the Lord. All you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord.

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says. Reform your ways and your actions, and I'll let you live in this place. That's what we've been reading all the time.

Hey, become a living sacrifice. Reform your own ways. Conform to mine.

Do not trust in deceptive words and say, this is the temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord.

If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I'll let you live in this place. In the land I gave your forefathers forever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

Verse 9. Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to bail and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house which bears my name and

say we're safe? Safe to do all these detestable things? We are safe. We are delivered. We're saved.

We're saved, and so we can continue to sin? No, that's not what God wants. He wants complete reformation of all your ways and actions. And it says put no gods before me in the end of verse 6. Don't follow other gods.

In the words of the New Testament, that might mean crucify everything else in your heart. Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts, it says in 1 Peter. So we've looked at that.

Praying, singing, reciting God's words, going to the physical outward things that people do in a way that they can point to these things and say, see, I've forsaken all, I've forsaken all, but they reserve in their hearts things that oppose God. So we don't want to be like that. Let me read one more verse about the temple.

It's just amazing. I can just hear the Lord in Malachi 1. Malachi 1, verse 10. He says, Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors so that you would not light useless fires on my altar.

I am not pleased with you, says the Lord Almighty. I will accept no offerings from your hands. I'm not going to accept your sacrifices if it's part way.

Oh, you might be sacrificing some things, but you're not a living sacrifice to me. I mean, I can just hear them. Oh, man, if they could just shut that door, then these people wouldn't be praying, they wouldn't be singing to me, they wouldn't be reciting my laws.

Well, if I could just stop that. It's like a stench in God's nose. So we don't want to do that.

We don't want to take the message of the Bible and make excuses for ourselves, look real good outwardly and reserve one little thing in our heart. Don't want to do that. Well, you don't want to go the other way either.

We don't want to go, you know, there's another pitfall you can do. You can take advantage of this concept in the Bible, forsaking everything in our heart. And therefore, the outside doesn't matter anymore.

Oh, believe me, everything's crucified in my heart. Oh, yeah, I know I'm doing this and this and this, but God doesn't really care because it's all in my heart. Hmm.

Well, the Bible teaches that if everything is crucified in your heart and you have forsaken all for God, it will manifest itself outwardly. Thus, we read in First Peter that we'll be living such good lives among the pagans. We'll be living unrepachable lives, blameless lives.

We'll be submitting, slaves will be submitting to their masters and all these other things. Wives will be submitting to their husbands and whatever else. We'll be great employers and we'll be obeying the laws of the land and all these things.

That's outward manifestation of inward heart. So in Galatians chapter six, it addresses the people who would like to think that, oh, God is pleased with me. God is pleased with me, even though I continue and do some things that aren't right.

But hey, it's my heart. That's not true. Galatians six addresses that.

Galatians chapter six, verse seven, seven through nine, it says, do not be deceived. Some people want to deceive themselves about what it's going to say here. Don't be deceived.

God is not mocked for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he, life. And let us not grow weary while doing good.

For in due season we shall reap if we don't lose heart. So don't be deceived. God's not fooled.

You say, oh, my heart's right. My heart's right. Then you go sowing the seeds of the flesh.

No, if you're pleasing your flesh, your heart's not right. No way. That's over in chapter five of Galatians, verse 13.

It says, yeah, you know, you're called to be free, Paul says. But don't use your freedom to indulge the flesh. Don't use your freedom as an occasion to serve yourself.

It's not what it's about. We read earlier in first Peter, chapter two, sixteen. Yeah, live as freemen, but don't use your freedom as a cover up for evil.

Instead, live as servants of God. Your lives should reflect the fact that you are a servant of God. If your lives don't reflect that, it reflects the fact that you are not a servant of God.

And so we see, I've heard all kinds of people make excuses like for their immoral and ungodly movies and things like that, even though God's words, Psalm 101, verse three, I will set before my eyes no vile thing. That's a response. The psalmist, that's a response to God's goodness.

Oh, God is so great. I'm not going to set before my eyes any vile thing. Psalm 119, verse 37.

The psalmist is praying, oh, turn my eyes away from worthless things. It's not God saying, hey, you people. This is a response by the psalmist to how great God is.

It's a reasonable response. If God is holy and righteous and just and true, and we believe he is, are we going to set before our eyes things that aren't or that are unholy, against being righteousness, and utterly false and deceptive and wicked and abhorrent? No. But why do people excuse it? Oh, it's all in my heart.

No, I'm sorry. God wants us to be living sacrifices. It's a reasonable response to God's mercy, and it's a response to God's mercy.

We talked several weeks ago about babes in Christ and how babes in Christ are like. Anybody who has seen and been experienced to God's mercy is going to just, whoa, and just drop everything, forsake all in their hearts for the Lord. And sometimes, my experience with new Christians, brand new Christians, is that they're overzealous.

They throw away everything, and not only do they forsake it all in their heart, but sometimes that just goes maybe a little too far, and they, whatever. I've seen that. That's the tendency I've seen in people who truly come to know God.

Maybe I've seen it the other way where they're kind of slower to catch on to things, but a lot of times it's an overzeal. Because the first time they've experienced God's mercy, it's like, oh, wow. Yeah, I've got to share this with some of you already, but Pepe, with his violin.

He's an accomplished violinist, and he's just a blessing in Chicago, but he's been walking with the Lord since February, I think he said. Not very long, and he's just talking about how he's got these violin recitals and these things coming up in a couple weeks. He's like, yeah, I should be practicing five or six hours a day right now, but I wanted to come here to Chicago to meet you guys.

I canceled my rehearsals with my pianist, which I think he said his pianist was from Paris. And I'm like, wait a minute, Pepe, what kind of recitals are we talking about here? And Chris Facey jumped in and said, yeah, he's just being kind of modest. He's pretty well-known, I guess, in the violinist world, but it was gone.

I mean, it was crucified. Pepe just said, you know, if God told me tomorrow to throw away my violin, I will. I don't care if it's worth \$150,000.

I was like, what? A \$150,000 violin? It's just gone. I mean, it's practically in the trash for him, but he's forsaken it in his heart. It's gone.

I mean, he's got a career out there. It's gone. Since February, he's been walking with the Lord.

Didn't take too long, did it? But he just had this initial response to God's mercy, you know, and he's ready to just throw away his whole violin career and just lock himself in his apartment forever. He's not thinking about how he's going to eat next month or whatever's going to happen. I mean, he's just going, you know, and God's going to work out exactly how that zeal will combine with now a little more knowledge of God and what he's going to do.

You know, he might have a violin career to the glory of God, and we don't know, but if he has a violin career, you can be assured with Pepe, it's crucified in his heart. I mean, it's gone. It's not an idol to him.

And if it is an idol, he won't be having a violin career. Amen. And the other guys that we met in Chicago were similar.

You know, they, just forsaking everything and just, you know, whatever. I mean, I could tell you all kinds of stuff, but, you know, as their zeal combines with the knowledge of God, and as they continue, and as they continue to respond to God's kindness and his goodness, you know, I have confidence in those guys that if something's an idol, they're not going to be doing it. And so God is like that, you know, it's what kind of process was there involved? You know, it's like, wow, God's goodness, God's mercy, a little like Saul, you know, getting zapped on the road and just, you just can't help but respond that way.

And so those of us in this room, I think those of us in Winter Chicago is kind of got charged up seeing these guys, you know, that initial response to God's mercy that we had maybe several years ago for some of us, you know, it was great to see that initial, you know, it's just neat. And so what we need to be careful of is not to get hardened to God's mercy, not to forget just how great he is, just how good he is. I mean, we don't want to stop responding to the goodness of God, to the mercy of God.

We don't want to fall into these pitfalls like, oh, we've forsaken all in our heart, I'm sure God wouldn't mind if I do this or, well, I'm doing all this stuff for God. You know, I went to Chicago, I gave up my time off of school. So of course, in my heart, if I keep this reserved, it's okay.

No, no, no, we want to make sure that in view of God's mercy, if we truly believe how great and how good God is, that we are responding and continuing to respond to his mercy, just like we have been all along. And if we're not responding right, if there's something not right, get it right. Because what a fellowship,

what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Maybe I could pray.

Father, we just want to thank you so much for all these things in your Word, Lord. It is so simple, Father, just your goodness and how unworthy we are in combining these things together and just responding to you properly, Father, in a way that would bring you honor and glory. Lord, it's our desire that we wouldn't be hardened to these things, that we wouldn't forget your goodness, that we would constantly be just spurred on and compelled and constrained, arrested by your love, Lord, and just motivated in all things by your love.

So, Father, we do want to just thank you so much for your abundant mercy, Lord, that we are just so unworthy and we thank you, Father. It's perplexing to even consider that you count us worthy, Lord. Father, you've bestowed on us riches in heaven, Lord, riches from heaven that we can now do your will.

And so we ask for your help, knowing that apart from you, we can do nothing. Lord, I do want to pray for these guys that we met this week, for Pepe and Chris Facey and Chris Craighead and Justin Cox, Lord, and the other people they've been ministering to, Father, that you would just guide them and lead them into all truth. Father, that they would continue to have all things set apart and just crucified in their heart, Lord, that you would be there all in all.

Father, even as I pray the same for each of us in this room, that we would just be totally all about you and not about ourselves, Lord, and that we truly have a grasp of just who you are and who we are, Lord, that we're your servants. So we thank you for the privilege of serving you. It's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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