

Ministering to the Lord

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the importance of ministering to the Lord through worship and prayer as foundational to effective missions and church life.

Duration: 1:11:00

Scripture: Joshua 24:15, Romans 3:19-20, Romans 5:1, Romans 8:37, Romans 9:11, Romans 12:1-2

Topics: "Ministering"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Romans, particularly chapters 1-11. He highlights how Paul, empowered by the Holy Spirit, condemns the entire human race through the law, but then reveals the way to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The preacher also discusses the challenges faced in the Christian life and how believers can be more than conquerors. He then addresses the controversial chapters of Romans 9-11, emphasizing the faithfulness of God despite the rejection of Israel. The sermon concludes with a call to worship and a reminder to not conform to the ways of the world but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

Transcript

Acts chapter 13, Now there were in the church that was in Antioch certain prophets and teachers as Barnabas and Simeon, that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Mahanan, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where into I have called them. If you have done any studying about missions, especially any studying about missions in any institution, you know that this is the pivotal point in the history of Christian missions.

I mean, this is it. You want to talk about the beginning of at least what we know to be the modern missionary movement to the nations, this about is it. This is it.

And I find it amazing that this is not a gathering here in Antioch of a bunch of mission experts coming to dialogue about the proper way of doing missions. This is not a mission conference, so to speak, about how they are going to strategize and manage the evangelization of the entire world. But what is it? That's a very difficult question.

What is really going on here? Because the words that are being used are so unusual to us. As a matter of fact, I have never been in a Baptist church that practiced what I'm seeing in this text. Now, I'm going to

open this up for a moment.

If the Lord lays an answer on your heart, please give it to us. But remember, I'm the one preaching, not you. OK, so keep it short.

But I want to ask you a question. What does it mean that they ministered to the Lord? I want to hear from you. What do you think that means? Does anyone have an answer? Anyone have an opinion? I'm sure there's someone out there.

Now, don't leave me hanging, boys. Does anyone have an idea? Don't think I'm going to shoot you down because I don't think my idea is very good either. What does it mean? Pardon me? OK, prayer and fasting.

Prayer and fasting, that's a good answer. They say they ministered to the Lord. How did they minister to the Lord? What were they doing? Worship.

OK, they were praying. They were worshiping. Praising.

OK. It did please Him. It did, it did.

Anyone else? He was the focus. The person of God was the focus. Notice here, missions was not the focus.

God was the focus. Anyone else? Anyone? They were singing. OK.

Yes. It's part of worship. All right.

In some way. They were ministering and serving Him in some way. Now, when you and I think of ministering or serving the Lord, we always think of it as going out from the Lord to minister and serve someone else in His name.

But that's not what's going on here. They are ministering to the Lord. Now, there isn't a whole lot to go on.

But let's first of all realize what's probably going on here isn't a Wednesday night church service. Where someone gets up and leads us in a few songs. This seems to be quite different than that.

It seems to be that these men of God, they came together for no other reason than to worship the Lord. Now, I want to be very careful here. Because if we simply say praying, I know what you're going to think.

You're going to think about the type of praying that we usually do. Whenever someone says they're going to have a prayer meeting, what does that mean? A lot of people come before God and start asking Him for things. Is that not basically what a prayer meeting is? And especially a Wednesday night prayer meeting in most churches.

Where we are more concerned about keeping sick saints out of heaven than getting sinners into the kingdom. Where most of our time is spent on praying for physical ailments and other such things, rather than the promotion of the kingdom of God. So I hesitate to say that they had just gathered there to pray, because what we would think automatically, well a bunch of men got together and they said a bunch of prayers about needs of different people.

Kind of dry, but obedient. But that's not what it says. It says they were ministering unto the Lord.

We hear this type of language in the Old Testament basically with the Levites. Those priests. And what did they do? They ministered to the Lord in the temple.

And mainly it was a ministry, other than the sacrificial ministry, which we don't have to worry about anymore. That was put away with, that was done away with when Christ the Great High Priest came. But what is going on here? I want to tell you that I sincerely believe that these men came before the Lord.

And basically what was coming out of their mouth was probably something like the book of Psalms. In turn, as led by the Holy Spirit, sometimes maybe in unison, sometimes maybe as individuals, these men were gathered together blessing the Lord. And how do you bless the Lord? Can the lesser bless the greater? How do you bless the Lord? By acknowledging His blessedness.

By speaking forth His attributes. By crying out His works. By making known His goodness, His greatness, His holiness, His righteousness.

Taking in as much as you can of the attributes of God and the workings of God. And speaking them forth to the throne of God. Worshipping Him.

Praising Him. Thanking Him. Demonstrations of gratitude.

Demonstrations of tears. Demonstrations of God. Everything we desire.

Everything we need. Everything we want. You have been there for us in every time.

They were together worshipping the Lord. And what comes out of it? Probably, well, the beginning of missions to the world as we know it. Now let me ask you something.

Pastors. Leaders. Churchmen.

Laymen. When was the last time you did this? And I don't mean call together a church meeting. Have a song leader up here.

He leads in a few songs and then you start praying. I'm talking about when was the last time a group of men, a group of leaders in your church came together, or the entire church for that matter, and just got to their knees or maybe fell on their faces and just spoke forth the glories and majesty of God. And worshipped Him with tears and with singing and with prayer.

Calling forth His attributes. Worshipping Him. Just being here all together.

Crying out to God. Not asking. Not necessarily lifting up even a petition unless it's, Oh God, make your name great among the nations.

But simply ministering unto the Lord. Maybe one person breaks forth in prayer about the holiness of God and goes on and on speaking about the grandeur and the majesty of God's holiness. Another one breaks forth and begins to speak about the faithfulness of God.

Crying out to Him. Extolling Him and worshipping Him for His faithfulness. Another one who has just been delivered from a terrible trial begins to break forth in tears crying out that God is His deliverer.

And just spend the night worshipping God. When was the last time you did that? I would have to say that this language is foreign to us. You know, I'm going to speak about this a bit tomorrow.

It bothers me. I'm asked to speak in a lot of missions conferences. And that the speakers always, as the motivation for missions, it's the dying lost.

The un-evangelized lost. That is the motivation for missions. Really, it's not.

I ask missionaries this. Has there ever been a time when you could not sleep at night because literally you were so concerned about the lostness of a certain people group that you stayed up all night crying and asking for their deliverance? And most missionaries will say, yes. Then I ask them this.

Was there ever a time, ever a night that you passed a sleepless night, miserable beyond comfort, because there are places on this earth that belongs to God where men are worshipping rocks and stone and self and not worshipping the one true God? Are you burdened about the fact that there are places where the banner of Christ is not raised and He's not worshipped as God over all? You see, we think we're God-centered. I want to tell you something, dear friend. We're still man-centered.

We are still man-centered. And then, when someone's called to the ministry, been called to the ministry, I always ask them, what ministry? I've never heard someone say, I feel like God has raised me up to do this one thing, to minister unto Him. Even music people, even though their language might say something else, in their attitude, I see basically that they see worship still as a ministry unto men.

It is a ministry unto the Lord. If you are a minister, you are first and foremost a minister unto the Lord. You are to minister to Him.

Will that not be our occupation throughout eternity? Is that not the occupation of the happy saints that dwell there now? Has that not always been the occupation of His servants, the angels, thousands upon thousands upon ten thousands? Have we missed the boat? Church, men of God, pastors, ask yourself this question. You know, I don't have to sit here and go through the nuances of this text. I don't have to break it down into a million different subheadings.

I don't have to dissect it. I just have to ask you a question. Have you ever done anything close to what we are seeing here? And isn't it amazing that in the middle of all of this, the greatest mission movement in the history of the world is born.

Maybe we've got it backwards. No maybe about it. We do have it backwards.

You begin with man, you don't end with God. You begin with God, you'll end with man. Remember the great commandment.

Love the Lord your God. Then there is a second, but never forget, it is the second. Love your neighbor.

Love your neighbor. We are not a people given to worship. And you can't fight me on this because I travel to churches all over this country.

And I have yet to see anything close to this. I see song services. I see prayer meetings.

But I don't see anything like this. What is so wrong with this? Is this charismatic or something? Is this liberal? Or is it biblical? I challenge you, men, pastors. Go home to your churches.

Call your most trusted, most godly men together for a night. Say, come out at seven. It's going to last till well, till we finish.

We're going to worship the Lord. We're not going to ask anything from him except that he might glorify himself. We're going to extol his attributes.

We're going to rejoice in his greatness. And we are going to speak in prayer back to the throne of God, exalting all the greatness of our Lord. And that's what we're going to do.

I can just hear the voices of some. What for? Well, I never heard of such a thing. Well, you ought to read the Bible more.

You say, well, I don't know how to do this. People say, well, I don't know how to praise the Lord. Well, let me give you a wonderful, wonderful book that was written.

Take this down. It's an absolutely wonderful book. It's penned by a few different authors and one main editor.

He's compiled all this. It's a wonderful book. It's called Psalms.

You know, when young men tell me they want to learn how to preach, I say, well, don't listen to me. But I'll tell you, here's what you do. I always recommend to them three different preachers.

I say, if you will read these men, just read their sermons, you'll learn how to preach. Charles Spurgeon, Martin Lloyd-Jones, and Alexander McLaren. So read them.

You'll learn how to preach. You want to learn how to praise God? Read the book of Psalms. Read the book of Psalms.

And read the book of Psalms. And memorize portions of the book of Psalms. And then when you open your mouth, the book of Psalms will come out.

You see, again, much of our Baptist theology is reactionary. We don't want to have anything like a Church of England prayer book. But we have a biblical prayer book, the book of Psalms.

Another thing about the Catholic Church that's taken the so-called Lord's Prayer and twisted it into a meaningless ritual, a repetition. But we as Baptists, I don't even ever hear the thing among us. And yet the only time the Lord was asked, how do you pray, He gave us that.

You see, we need to be very, very careful. What should we do, Baptists? Baptists, come together. Christians that are here, Presbyterians, whoever you are, come together.

And do what? Worship the Lord. But be very careful. Do you know why? You've heard of cell groups, right? Churches break off into cell groups.

You know why that never works among Baptists? I'll tell you. Because whenever Baptists start making cell groups, they turn them into little Wednesday night services. With one man, one music guy, and everyone else listens.

That's why cell groups don't work. Because we just turn them all into little churches. That's why mentoring and discipleship in the Baptist Church is very, very difficult.

Why? Because the guy doing the discipleship just ends up being a teacher of another Sunday school class. We've got to break out of some of these molds that we're in. You try to do this, I tell you, I pray that

the Lord will just strike your steeple with lightning.

If you go home and try to do this right here, that's found in Acts 13, and you turn it into just, okay, now we're going to have a brother who's going to come and do some hymns for us now, and then after he does that, we've already told different brothers, and they're going to stand up and they're going to pray. If you do that, you've missed everything. This is a group of men, a group of leaders, coming together to minister unto the Lord.

Why don't we do it? Why? That's the first part that I wanted to address. Now I want to go to something quite different, over in the book of Romans, chapter 12, verse 1. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This is a very important passage with regard to worship. And why is that? Well, running through our evangelical churches, and running through even our Baptist churches, there are two sets of footprints that ought not be there. One is Aristotle, our Greek way of thinking, instead of a Hebrew way of thinking.

And the other is the Pope. In what way? You have no idea, neither do I, how much not only our culture, but religiosity has shaped our views of doing things. Even those of us who consider ourselves biblical, fundamental, reformed, whatever you consider yourself to be, we ought to constantly be aware that you and I have so many ideas that are not biblical.

Let me give you an example. I always tell, when I'm doing this thing on the power of God, I always ask the people in the church, I want you to close your eyes. I know it sounds kind of guru-ish, but I always say, close your eyes, and I want you to picture in your mind Samson.

Samson. Got that picture? He looks like a Jewish Arnold Schwarzenegger, right? If he looked like Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Philistines wouldn't have had any problem in discovering where his strength came from. I would submit to you that he probably looked like a rural mountain man in Peru.

Thin, wiry, not an ounce of fat on his body, from working on the farm, tilling the ground, doing whatever he had to do. And if you looked at him, you would have just seen a normal man. You see, you and I are always saying, he's strong.

Well, if he's strong, he has to have muscles. I don't care how big your muscles are, you can't pick up the gate of a city and carry it on your back. There are no muscles that big.

It was by the power of God. Now, let's take a moment for just a moment. Now, I'm going to ask you to do something that, please, I don't agree with it necessarily, I just want to prove a point.

If you closed your eyes and tried to picture what you think Jesus might have looked like. Now, for most of you, this wouldn't be a problem. You know the foolishness of that to begin with.

But most people, even those who sit in our churches, even some truly converted, when they closed their eyes and they looked and imagined what Christ would be like, He looks just like the Christ of 15th and 14th and 13th century Catholic art. A Christ that looks like a homosexual because most of the guys who did those paintings were homosexuals. Now, I said all that to say all this.

When we look at this passage, you're saying, well, this is talking about your life and laying down your life and your body. And what's that have to do with worship? What you need to understand is you and I, the one thing I love about the Puritans is they seem to break themselves free of this thing that still holds us captive. I've talked to some of you and I've seen the captivity.

I heard the captivity in your words. It's the idea that in the Christian life, that the Christian life is still somehow divided up into secular and sacred. That there are certain things in your life that are sacred, like going to church, like prayer, like fasting, like serving in the church, like reading your Bible and all these things.

And then when you get out Sunday and Monday, you go back to the secular. You go back to your secular job. If you're a Christian, my dear friend, you cannot say that.

I don't care if you work in a factory putting tops on bottles. There is no such thing as a secular job. You don't even have a secular moment in your life.

And that is one of the problems. That is why your joy is so hindered. That is why the purpose in your life seems to be at least vague, almost non-existent.

Because you don't see... I hear people say, well, you know, as a Christian, you've got the kingdom of God over here and then you've got this. No, you don't. If you're a Christian, everything is inside here.

And nothing is secular. Everything is sacred. Sometimes I love England, I love the United Kingdom, except for the Englishman that's working with me right now.

He drives me crazy. But other than that, I love Celtic hymns. Why? Because they were pagans.

Now what do I mean by that? Prior to the coming of Christianity, these guys were pagans. They're worshipping their bow, they're worshipping water, they're worshipping trees and stars, they're pantheists. I mean, they're wild men in the woods.

Especially the Irish. You have to be from the United Kingdom to know what I'm talking about there. But what happened when they became Christians? They stopped worshipping all those things.

But they saw in all those things the glory of God so that they sang in their hymns about wind blowing through a meadow, about stars being set on fire by the power of God, about trees and rivers and everything. Because everywhere they looked, they no longer saw a pantheistic view of the world, but everywhere they looked, they saw the power of God. Someone asked me, when do you know you're starting to grow in Christ with regard to devotion, piety and worship? I said, when you can be walking around, walking down a lane in the country and come to a small pool of muddy water and see a bunch of tadpoles swimming around in there and fall down on your knees and worship at the glory of God.

When you can look at the back of a leaf and see the veins running through there that bring sap to that thing and make it green and it causes you almost to tremble with fear at the power and wisdom of the One who could do such a thing, you are starting to grow in Christ. And we have missed it! We've missed it! The dear brother who mentors me who's been a greatest blessing, he's like a father to me. We were over in Romania together and we walked into this Baptist church that was just highly decorated and everything, you just have to see the way they are sometimes.

He goes, behold the fantasy. I thought, what? He said, look at the illusion. We're now in the religious world.

And I said, what are you saying? He said, look how we live. He says, here's this God, the maker of the heavens and the earth and we go into this little decorated box and this is the only place we worship Him. And then we come out of course and we get back into reality.

We leave the fantasy behind and we return to the real world. We should be men who worship at the drop of a hat. We should be men who when we feel a raindrop hit our nose, it drives us to our knees.

We should be men who can open up a science book and look at something like a platypus and just stand in awe at the brilliance of God. Everything in our lives should be an act of worship. And everything we see that is good and perfect and made by the hand of the Creator, every aspect of our life ought to bring forth worship.

It ought to bring forth worship. I love, as I've said many times, I'm a woodsman and I love to be outdoors. And I love to take my little boy and show him leaves and sticks and bean pods and crickets.

For him to jump in water when it floods from the Ohio River and walk around in it and splash. Take mud and put it on his face. Show him how it dries on his hand.

And in all these things say, look what God has done. Shall we not worship? Shall we not worship? Look at the doe, the hind, as she leaps over that fence. The power in those legs, son.

Who put that power there? It was God, let's pray. Oh, my dear friend. My dear friend.

My dear friend. Everything, you're probably familiar with Plato's idea of the cave, where there is a fire burning in a cave and the man sees the shadow and not the reality of the thing bouncing off the cave wall. We have come to almost believe that this is reality.

That what we can see is reality. And we don't realize that that which is unseen is the reality. All of this is a shadow.

But everything put here by God has a means, a purpose to it, and that is to stir us to worship. Do, on the blade of a grass, the way of a snake on a rock, the sound a frog can make on the first warm day of spring. All of it, all of it, all of it made for God's glory.

Now that I've said that, let's look at our text. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. First of all, Paul says, I beseech you.

Now, Paul was an apostle. But here, this is the heart of a spiritual father. This is the heart of a pastor.

This is the heart of a man deeply and dearly united and intimately in love with his children. He wants the best for this church. He wants the best for the believers.

He wants the best for you. And his kindled heart cannot even begin to reflect the fire in God's heart. He says in Jeremiah that he will rejoice over his people to do them good and plant them in the land with all his heart and with all his soul.

It says that about God. He will rejoice over you to do you good. And right now, through this text, God is beseeching you.

He is encouraging you. He is pleading with you to listen to what he's about to say because what he's about to say will do you good. Oh, dear brother, your heart has been so beat down.

Your heart has been made so dull by what you think it means to walk with God. And you have missed it. You have missed the joy.

It does not come from ministry. It does not come from all these other things. It comes from looking at everything you can possibly look at and realize the power and majesty of your God.

Thinking back on what God has done for you and worshipping at his altar. From there comes the joy. And he says, I beseech you, brethren, to do something.

To do what? To present your bodies a living sacrifice. He asks these men, these women, these believers to give the ultimate gift. To lay down themselves, their bodies, their very lives as a living sacrifice.

You can't ask anyone to do anything more than that. I mean, this is the greatest thing you could possibly ask a person. To lay down their bodies, their lives as a living sacrifice.

So in order to do something like that, we're going to need some tremendous motivation. I mean, for what reason? What thing could cause us to lay down our lives? What thing could make us joyfully sacrifice our own bodies? He says it here, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God. You say, so many brothers and so many people come to me and they say, Brother Paul, I know what's right to do, I just lack the motivation.

I know I ought to worship more. I know I ought to do this more. I know I ought to do so many things.

I ought to have more gratitude, more zeal, more passion, more desire for worship. All these things, but I just lack the motivation. Paul says, I'll give you motivation.

And what's that motivation? The mercies of God. And what is he referring to? He's referring to the first 11 chapters of this book. That's exact.

And he does the same thing in the book of Ephesians. You want to know the deepest theology in the Bible? It's not found in the book of Revelation. It's the first three chapters of Ephesians.

And in those first three chapters, he sets before us all the wonderful, marvelous, indescribable riches of the things God has done for us in Christ. And after three chapters of laboring to explain to us all the wonder that God has done for us in Christ, he says, now live this way. In the same way here, he says, by the mercies of God.

In the first three chapters of the book of Romans, what do we find? We find Paul, the master soul hunter, empowered by the Holy Spirit, inspired by the Holy Spirit, writing with one purpose, those first three chapters, to condemn the entire human race. He labors with all his might, with all his pen, with all his intellect, with everything he has, to capture all men and to shut their mouths before a holy God and His law. And then, four and five, he breaks forth in how shall we be saved? Through the law? No, we're condemned by faith.

By faith in Jesus Christ. And he shows us the great work that God has done for us in His only begotten Son. And then in six and seven and eight, he deals with our problems in the Christian life and he shows how we can be more than conquerors.

And then in nine, ten and eleven, three controversial chapters. Sometimes in our controversy, we miss the blessing. These three chapters, if they do anything for us, they teach us that God is faithful.

God is faithful. How do you explain the rejection of Israel? How do you explain the Gentile church? How do you explain this and that? And he just pronounces one thing. God is faithful and every promise He's ever made, He will fulfill to everyone He's ever made it to.

And we rejoice in that. And then we get to chapter 12 and he says, Therefore, God having done all these things for His people in His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, now, offer yourself, present yourself as a living sacrifice to Him. Now, he says, By the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.

Now the first thing, present. The tense here clearly indicates that this is not a continual thing which you do every day to present yourself a living sacrifice. This is more of a Joshua thing.

This day, decide what you're going to do. Once and for all, as the prophet would say, stop limping between two opinions. Once and for all, present yourself to God as a living sacrifice.

As a living sacrifice. As a living sacrifice. Now, there's something very difficult about a living sacrifice and something very easy about a dead one.

Dead ones stay put. Living ones slide off the altar. It is much easier to die for Jesus Christ than it is to live for Him.

I'll give you a perfect example. Jim Elliot. I want to take nothing away from Jim Elliot and the work of those men.

But Jim Elliot was in that jungle for a few months. And he was martyred. And he went on to glory.

And became probably the most famous or one of the most famous Christian martyrs in the history of the church. But I know old men and old women. Their bodies racked with pain.

Their faces and bodies scarred. Their hearts torn asunder because of 30 and 40 and 50 years of service on the mission field. Die for Christ.

I can tell you firsthand that when for the sake of the Gospel your life is put at risk, a strange and powerful grace comes over you that would make you fight hell with a water pistol. And firsthand I can tell you that it seems it would be much easier to die for Jesus Christ than to get up and live every day for Him. And this is what we are about.

We want to be constant and consistent lovers of our Lord. We want to put our hand to the plow and not look back. We want to lay down our lives as an act of worship and never pick them up again.

And we lay down our lives not with sorrow, not depressed, not wearied, because we believe the One who has spoken that the one who seeks to gain His life will lose it. And the one who loses his life for the sake of Christ will gain it. Lay down your life.

Lay down your life and present your life to Him as a living sacrifice. The great, and he is a marvelous theologian, Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch Reformed theologian, who many things he has said that I deeply, deeply appreciate. One thing he said, I just have a short note here that was just so amazing, that he said he was speaking to a group of liberal theologians, just the whole room filled with liberals and humanism and man-centeredness.

And old Abraham Kuyper came to the platform and he said, I have one thing to tell you all. When Jesus Christ returns, you think this world belongs to the race of men. But when Jesus Christ returns, the word you're going to hear coming forth out of His mouth is simply this, mine, mine, mine, mine, mine, mine, mine.

He'll take it all because it was all made for Him and all made by Him and for His glory. I just had to throw that in. I love that.

But Abraham Kuyper writes that in the kinesis, the emptying of the Christ, the Son of God did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but He emptied Himself. He did not stop being deity. He became something deity had never been.

Deity took upon itself humanity. But we need to be careful, he says, when we talk about the emptying of Christ and think that it just refers to this one act of incarnation. But we need to realize that not only His coming down from Heaven, but as He walked on earth, He continually emptied Himself until that final moment when He's on the cross.

He is the emptiest man there has ever been. He now has no friends. He now has no clothes.

He now has no dignity. Everything that was His was gone. It's a tremendous statement.

My dear friend, I want to tell you something. To the degree that we follow the Lord in these degrees of death, will we be happy? Will we have joy? It is not the man who keeps himself for himself, but the man who empties himself for the glory of God that abounds with the greatest joy. And this thing of offering ourselves as a sacrifice, yes, once and for all we need to decide, present ourselves before God as a living sacrifice, but always carry this attitude within ourselves of giving ourselves away, of laying down our lives, of emptying ourselves and becoming truly full.

My little boy, sometimes I give him lemonade. He likes lemonade. And I'll fill up his cup and he'll say, more, even before he drinks it.

And I'll say, well, son, there's a mathematical equation going on here. There's a very difficult problem. I can't give you more because your cup is already full.

You have to empty that cup before I can put something in it. In the same way, I hear Christians all the time crying out for the filling of God. You can't fill something that's already full.

If you're already full of self and world and all the trappings that go with it, then is there any room for the divine? Offer yourself unto God. I have never met a servant of God. I have never met a servant who has suffered terrible things for the sake of his God that at the end of his days complained.

Never. Never. He says, a living sacrifice wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

The word holy. I talked about this the first time I stood in this pulpit, but I want to mention it again. We confuse many times the attribute of holiness with the attribute of righteousness, and we ought to be careful.

The Westminster give us an adequate definition of righteousness. Conformity to the law of God. Conformity to the will of God.

And we can say that is quite true. Conformity to the will of God. Conformity to the law of God.

But what is holiness? Most people when they think of the word holiness think of sinlessness, they think of obedience, they think of purity, they think of all these things. And those things are there in a sense. But the word holy means cut in its most basic root, and it means separated.

God is holy, not simply because He's sinless. God is holy because He is separated from everything else, everything that is common, everything that is vulgar. There is none like the Lord.

And as I shared, an archangel in the presence of God is no more closer to being like God than the bacteria floating around in your toilet. Neither one of them is like God. Neither one of them is even close to being like God.

Because God is not like us, just greater. He's not like us at all. He's holy.

He is separate unto Himself. He's the only one. He is unique.

Now what does it mean? I explained that in greater degree the first time I preached. But what does it mean for us to be holy? You say, well, holiness means we're separate from the world. No, that's just a tiny bit of what holiness means.

That actually is just the door we run through to start to enter into the land of holiness. Holiness is not just separation from all the bad things. But it is separation not only from, but separation unto God.

Separation from all that contradicts the character and attributes of God and separation unto God as a person. My friend, if you don't understand this definition, you're probably going to become an ungodly legalist. It's not just separation from sin.

What is it? It's separation unto God. It is seeing God's worth. It is esteeming God's supremacy.

It is considering God to be of the greatest value. You hold on to God as having greatest worth above all things. Infinite worth.

And you are given unto Him. That is why, my dear friend, you can cross every T, dot every I, and fulfill every biblical principle and still not be holy. If your heart is far from Him.

If you are not clinging unto Him. It is to be holy and acceptable unto God. Acceptable to God.

When it comes to worship, I often ask music directors this question. Have you gone through all of the Scripture to determine how God desires to be worshipped? From whom did you learn your form of worship? Now, I'm not espousing any certain form of worship, nor am I denying the validity of other. I'm just saying this.

I don't care if you say it's the way the Baptist church has always done it or anybody else. I really don't care, because the Baptist church and everything else such as it, Presbyterian, fundamentalism, everything else, that is not our standard, my friend. And I want you to know, if you practice something long enough without returning to the Word to see if it's valid, it's probably turned into an unbiblical tradition.

You need to go to Scripture. You need to go to Scripture. Because whatever is to be done in this church is to be done as acceptable to God.

What does God desire? I'll never forget in Peru our music director. He was beginning to... God was working in his heart and he began to do more songs that were just about the attributes of God, the attributes of God, the attributes of God, extolling the person of God. Him getting totally out of the way.

He seemed to disappear up there in the platform. And it was just people worshipping God. And he came to me one day and he said, Brother Paul, and he's a very loving man, he said, Brother Paul, I think I need to address the church.

I've heard complaints about our worship and things like that. He began to speak with me. He talked with the other elders.

And we said, sounds like the Lord. I mean, go ahead. So he gets up and he said, you know, some people have been saying that in the worship service, it's just not really doing a lot for them and that they don't really feel like it's addressing them and their needs.

And he said, I would just like to share something with you. I really don't care. Now, he could say that.

Why? I know it was sarcastical. He could say it because everyone in that church knew that he loved them. You can do a lot when people know that you love them.

But then he said, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, this thing of worship is not for you and it is not for me. And how are we to determine in ourselves what God desires? We must go to Scripture. What does God desire? People always talk about having a seeker-friendly church.

I agree. I think we ought to have a seeker-friendly church. I am totally behind seeker-friendly churches.

I was in a conference of seeker-friendly churches a while back and I said, guys, I am totally behind this thing of seeker-friendly. The only thing we need to change is we need to realize this. There's only one seeker.

His name is God. And if you want to be friendly to somebody, you better be friendly to Him. Because that is the truth.

He is the seeker. Kierkegaard, even though he was impious and everything else, that wild philosopher, he was right when he said, worship. In worship, the congregation is not the audience.

They are the worshipers. God is the audience. And whatever we do, whatever we do, we ought to determine, is it acceptable to God? Is it acceptable to God? You know, it's so amazing.

Let me share this with you. The hymns that we so love, and I love hymns. My favorite hymns, I guess, are from Charles Wesley and the like.

Again, I go back to the United Kingdom. Love those old hymns. But the hymns that we so consider to be the only hymns that really should be sung in the church, when they were first written, they were a scandal.

Why? We should only be singing out of the book of Psalms. And you're writing hymns? Now, we have people coming back and putting melodies to different psalms in the Bible, and we think that's a scandal. I think we need to be careful.

I think we need to make sure we're not throwing the baby out with the bath water. Or more importantly, we're not throwing God out with our tradition. The only thing that matters, my dear friend, is what does the Bible say? What does the Bible say about worship? And when it comes to worship in our own personal life, it comes to worship in our congregation, the one thing we need to ask ourselves is what does God desire? Not what have we always done, and not what are the other brethren going to approve.

You know, the fear of man is a snare. What does God say? And He goes on and He says, "...which holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This verse right here could save you and your children from entering into a cult. You say, well, what do you mean? Well, just this.

Cults are always led by a man. And that man always asks his followers to lay down their life for him. And it is unreasonable, according to the Bible, to lay down your life for such a man.

But it is very reasonable service to lay down your life for the One who laid down His life for you. It is a reasonable thing. There is nothing that the Lord could ask of me or you that is not reasonable.

If He asked me right now, without even saying goodbye to my wife, to get on a plane, to fly to the Middle East, to preach in the plaza until they cut me to pieces with swords, it would be reasonable. My prayer is that one day God takes my two sons and uses them. I tell people, and they're almost angry with me, if one day my boy comes to me at 18 years old and says, Dad, I'm not going to college.

Son, what are you going to do? I'm going to go to such and such place where they kill Christians and I'm going to walk across that border and I'm going to preach because that's what God has told me to do. Dad, will you take me? Will you take me at least to the border? Son, I'll take you to the border. I'll watch you cross and I'll kiss the ground that your blood falls upon.

There is nothing unreasonable that the Lord could ask of you. First of all, our Master is a kind and gracious Master. He loves His lambs.

He is the Good Shepherd. But even when that Good Shepherd may ask us to give away our very lives for Him, it is reasonable to do so. It is unreasonable to do anything else.

It is so unreasonable to live for a temporal passing world that has been given over to fools. But it is very reasonable to live for the Lord. Now, let me say something about reasonable service.

This may help you. It's a short personal testimony about something that the Lord did in my life. I took great pride in my devotion and my dedication.

I took great pride in that I studied harder than anyone else at seminary. I took great pride in that I was more careful about my walk. I took great pride in my preaching on the streets and living with street people.

I took great enjoyment in knowing that students would be sitting around tables having a good time until I showed up. Until Moses came down from the mount. I took great pride in people seeing me tired.

I took great pride in hearing people say, that young man is just giving his life away. I took pride in people seeing that I was poor and that I would not take anything from any man. And then one day, I was with a man who has disciplined me for years.

You might know him, George Mueller. I was rereading Brother Mueller and I caught a statement that I had never heard before. He said this, he never wanted anyone to see him tired, burdened, distraught, or needy, because they might think that his master was cruel, uncaring, and unable to provide for him.

You do not glorify God by what you do for Him as much as God glorifies Himself by what He does for you. Never forget, who is saving who here? I used to think I was glorifying God by giving away absolutely everything, by wearing myself out and everything else, but what I was doing was glorifying Self. Never forget when it says that we're to glorify whether we eat or drink or any other thing, we're to do all for the glory of God.

Never forget that eating and drinking is receiving from the Lord. When you eat, from where does that food come? From the Lord. When you drink, from where does it... We glorify God more by demonstrating to people all that the Lord has done for us instead of demonstrating to everyone what we've done for the Lord.

And that is a statement that will free you up. You know what I desire? All my life, I saw all these big-haired preachers and small-haired preachers with one hair that was 30 feet long and saw all this stuff. All these great men with their great empires always telling me how I could be great too if I would just do what they've done.

Look at my spiritual secret. Do you know what my desire is? And I'm well suited for this. I love it when God uses me and people say, a spectacular move of God has occurred here these two weeks.

And then they follow me home and after a few days, they say, Brother Paul, I'm perplexed. I say, what? I don't find anything special in you at all. You're just... You're like me.

You struggle with your prayer life. Sometimes you talk too much and you say too much and on and on. I don't appreciate that laughter.

Or you're grabbing your little watches. Don't worry about me. I'm not tired.

I can keep going. But my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we do no service, especially to young ministers, when we try to portray to them that we've reached some spiritual level and therefore God uses us. And if they can get to that level, they'll be used too because we put them in bondage that we can't even lift with a finger.

You know, if God ever supposedly does something in your ministry and you can write a book about it, it wasn't God. If God uses you, really, the only thing you can do is say something like this. Well, I don't know.

I was standing here and God came from over in this direction and went this way and it was marvelous. I don't know what went on. Or when God uses you, you will be... When you see a genuine work of God occur around you, you'll always know it's a genuine work of God if your response is like that of Peter's.

When as soon as the Lord did that miracle of the fish, He fell down and said, Depart from Me, O Lord, I am a sinful man. Any time that God has used me or any time I have seen Him use another man of God, they

wanted to hide. And they almost wanted to say, No, Lord, You should have used someone else, not me.

I want to say in verse 2, He says, And be conformed to this world. Do not be conformed. And be not conformed to this world.

It means, Do not be made out of the same mold as this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Now, let's get back to culture for a moment. We are so inundated with culture and we don't even know it.

We can't see it. Because, you know, fish don't notice water. When we swim in a sinful culture, it's hard to begin to discern what is right and what is wrong.

And the sin can be heaped upon us. We can drink it down like water and not even notice it. I'll give you an example.

This is an example I use with college students all the time. If there are some older people in the group, and I'll pick those older people out. They have to be in their 60s.

And I'll say, Older people, tell me if this is true or not. What these Christian college students right here, what they wear to the beach on Saturday. If someone had dressed like that 60 years ago in public, an unbeliever, the unbelieving government would have either had them thrown into a prison or an asylum.

Is that not true? And then I look at them and I say, You can't see how much of culture has got a hold of you because you're not renewing your mind in the Word of God. And many of them, it's not open rebellion. It is flat out deception, my friend.

And they need to be delivered through preaching. I'll give you an example. You're talking about the guys that pull their pants down, right? Real low.

Well, let me just show you. I was in a church one day and the guy had his pants down, his underwear and everything. I walked up to him, sat down, and I said, How are you doing? He goes, Fine.

I go, Do your parents know? He said, What? I said, Are your parents Christians? Are they here in the church? Yes. Well, do they know? Well, know what? Hey, look, don't get upset. I'm on your side, man.

I love you. I want to help you as much as I can. Do they know? Do they know what? Well, do they know that you're homosexual? And the kid goes, What? I said, No, really.

I mean, look, I'm a minister. I mean, I have the love of Jesus in me. I just want to help you, guy.

I'm not here to condemn you or anything. I'm here to help you. I just hope you get set free from this bondage.

He goes, I'm not a homosexual. What makes you think I'm a homosexual? I said, Well, you told me you were. He said, What do you mean? I said, You think I'm just old.

I'm a preacher. I don't know anything. You're young and wise and know all the ways of the world.

So let me tell you something, young man, when a homosexual in prison has just broken up with his boyfriend, you know how he tells all the other prisoners that are homosexuals that he's looking for a new man. No, that that's where that comes from. He said, I didn't know that.

I said, see it, See it? You think you're so wise and you are so blind. You would never dress up like a homosexual, would you, young man? No, sir, I would never do that. But you're doing it because you're not quite as wise as you think you are and it's because you're not renewing your mind in the Word of God.

And even the things of the world you do not know as you think you know. You see how quick we can be deceived? And he says, don't do that but be transformed. We all know that word in Greek.

We get the word metamorphosis. My dear friend, Christianity is not simply taking upon yourself a moral ethic. It is supernatural change by the power of God through the Holy Spirit.

And I want to tell you something. This comes right out of Macmillan, Banner of Truth. This is solid stuff.

The Holy Spirit is just as important to your salvation as Jesus Christ. It is He who applies the saving work of Christ to your life. It's He who calls you, regenerates you, and it is He who continues transforming you.

And it is supernatural or it's natural, and if it's natural, it's death. And the renewing of our mind in the Word of God that you may prove what is good, acceptable and perfect, the will of God. Now, just do something really quick.

This is really good. I have an entire teaching on this. I can't give tonight, but for you parents, at least give you the first part.

When children are always saying, I don't know what the will of God is, I don't know what the will of God is, you can build a parameter of the will of God for them. First of all, the will of God is what? It is good. In this context, it means that whatever will produce a healthy spiritual life, it is good.

It is acceptable to God. Maybe not your culture, maybe not anything else, just to God. And it is perfect.

As I told the pastors yesterday, men who have always said that, you know, well, I couldn't take care of my family because I had to offer my family on the altar of sacrifice, the service of God. I had to minister in God's name, therefore, I couldn't take care of my family. Men who say things like that are blaspheming God because they're saying that God's will is not perfect.

They're saying in order to fulfill God's will in one aspect of your life, you have to break God's will in the other aspect of your life. And that, my friend, simply is not true. How do you know the will of God? It is always good.

It will lead to your spiritual prosperity, your spiritual health. It is acceptable. It will conform itself always to the written, revealed will of God.

And it is perfect. There's no flaw in it. And that's what I want us to see tonight, that worship, that worship is not just coming into an ecclesiastical religious setting and singing some songs.

Every breath is given to you for one purpose, to return it to God in worship, every beat of your heart. Every beat of your heart is to beat for him. What does it mean to be holy? Every breath, every beat for him.

What does it mean to worship every beat, every breath in every circumstance? So if you are fasting and praying. It is a sacred activity of worshiping God, and if you are walking in the morning and watching the sun come up and the dew sparkle on the grass, it should throw you into worship. And if you hold your first grandchild in your arms, it should cause you to dance with joy.

Oh, I forgot we're Baptist. Should cause you to jump around in a funny way with joy. Let's pray.

Father, I pray that you will use, that you have used by your generous spirit and your good providence. Use this in the lives of your people. Whatever is not of you, Lord, let it be forgotten, let it die in the dust.

But whatever is of you, Lord, let it not remain within the walls of this building, but let it be transmitted to others through your people in Jesus name.

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