

## PROVIDENCE CHURCH

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### **How People Change – Part I**

**Pastor Ty Blackburn**

**Romans 12:1-2**

**January 3, 2016**

Amen. Please turn with me in your Bibles to the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans. We'll be looking at Verses 1-2 this morning. We had set aside our exposition of the book of John temporarily back in November, due to some, well we were at the cross and we didn't want to interrupt that section of Scripture. We wanted also, in the beginning of the new year, to spend some time talking about some things that are on our hearts as Elders. So we are going to be doing that in a couple of weeks, but I wanted to spend the first two Sundays of the new year really dealing with kind of new year messages. The new year is a time of reflection, a time of resolution, you reflect back over the past year. You think about the things that have happened, things that have transpired. I think it is often bittersweet. Many blessings, but also some losses, and difficulties, challenges. And as you think about the past, you also look toward the future, so it is a time for resolution. You know, resolving, not everybody makes resolutions.

We were talking the other day about resolutions, and James Rouse said, "I haven't made resolutions, I've got some reservations about the new year." And sometimes that is the way it is too, we have reservations about the new year. What is the new year going to bring? But as people of God, we can look to the new year with optimism because we know who holds the future, and we know His purposes will be carried out. The Lord is in the heavens, He does as He pleases, does all of His will, even though at times we see many opposed to Him, He is still unmoved, joyfully carrying out His plans.

Now, I chose this passage, Romans 12:1-2, because it deals with the subject of change. In fact, the title of the message this week and next week is 'How People Change'. I borrow that title from Paul Tripp and Timothy Lane's book, a very helpful book by that title, How People Change. We heard a message a few weeks back by Joshua Mack, 'Can People Change?' So I'm following that up, 'How People Change'. Wonderfully, the Gospel is all about change, but how is it that we experience that change? You know, I mentioned the new year is a time of reflection, resolution, it is something that is clear, and is a part of just the fabric of humanity, that we know we need change.

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I think it is one of the reasons that we have so many TV shows that are about change. You know, reality TV shows, I think about all of the ones that kind of set before you changes. You know, like ‘The Biggest Loser’, which is about a person who wins by losing the most weight. Somebody goes from weighing 350 pounds to 175. That is a big change, extreme weight loss, extreme makeover, we could go on, and on, and on, just looking at all those types of shows. What is it that captivates us? Or captivates people about those? I think it is the sense that we all know we need to change. We have things that are wrong in the world, we see that, and we need change. But we also see it in ourselves, and people who don’t yet understand the Gospel, still know they need to change.

Some of my favorite shows are the ‘Extreme Makeover Home Edition’, or ‘This Old House’. I am terrible with tools myself, but I like to watch other people do stuff like that, and have it work. It always works on TV, doesn’t it? At least if they have a problem they quickly fix it. It is the same thing, to see an old house renovated, renewed, changed for the better. There is something redemptive about that, and that is the fabric of humanity, even though those who don’t know Christ, don’t yet embrace the Gospel, yet they know they need something to happen. We all have that great need.

Now as Christians, we should be looking at a new year with a sense of reflection, and asking some different questions. How is our family doing? How am I doing? Am I growing in grace? Am I becoming more like Jesus? Because that is God’s plan for us, is change every day to become more and more like Jesus. So the new year is an opportunity to stop and ask, “Am I today more like Jesus than I was this time last year?” You can make that more specific, you know, are you more loving? Are you more gentle? Are you more humble? Are you less anxious? Less fearful? Less angry? Less lustful? These are the questions that help us to examine and take an assessment of where we are spiritually. When we look at that, and we look back over this last year, we probably had many regrets. There are so many areas I hoped to be farther in than I am today. Why hasn’t there been more growth? Well there are a couple of possible reasons why we don’t change, a couple of possible reasons.

One reason, of course, is that if you have never truly become a follower of Jesus Christ, you don’t have the power to really fundamentally change. You can only do surface changes. Fundamental change starts in the heart. So sometimes people who think they are Christians wonder that they are not changing, but it is because they haven’t really truly been born again. There is no new life inside of them. God has

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not caused them to go from death to life, and so the application of Scripture, things like that, can't feed what is not there. That is why the Scripture encourages us a couple of different places with things like this, 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves to see if you are in the household of faith." Or 2 Peter 1:9 where he says, "Make every effort to make your calling and election sure, to make certain about your salvation."

That is one reason, but there is also a second reason that we are often not changing like we should, and that is because we are not following God's plan. You may be truly born again, but you've forgotten to really follow His plan. This is what so many of us struggle with. You can't change in your own strength. Human effort cannot produce the righteousness of God, these unbiblical methods. So we come to this passage this morning, Romans 12:1-2, because I think it presents us with something of a blueprint for change, how to change in God's way, by God's power. Romans 12:1-2, the apostle Paul writes:

***Romans 12:1-2 ~ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.***

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank You for the grace that you have made known through Jesus Christ. We thank You for the power of Your word, the perfect truthfulness of it, that it is a living book, and that Your Spirit uses Your word to produce life, and then to produce change. And we pray that You would have Your way in each heart in this room for the glory of Jesus, Amen.*

'How People Change'. A keyword in this passage, and one of the reasons I chose this passage is the word in Verse 2, ***...do not be conformed to this world...*** but the keyword, ***...but be transformed...*** now that is a word about change. *Be transformed*, the Greek word is the word 'metamorphóō', from which we get the English transliteration 'metamorphosis', which means 'a complete change of form and structure'. The idea here in the passage is that to be changed from the inside out is what is to happen to the follower of God, that we are to live lives of continual transformation and change. It is an inside out change that happens. It is a fundamental structural change that continues throughout the Christian life. It

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begins when someone sees their need of a Savior. When someone comes to understand that we are guilty before God, that when we are compared with the standard of God's law, it is a standard of perfection. What must a person be like to go into the presence of a holy God? We must be perfect, there can be no sin because God is holy, and He cannot dwell with sin.

So when we realize that, we realize that in ourselves we are hopeless, but then we see that Jesus Christ is God's provision for our helplessness. That He became man, God became man, and lived a perfect life, fulfilling every bit of God's law in His perfection, perfect righteousness, having never sinned as a spotless lamb. He then goes to the cross so that He could bear in Himself the sins of everyone who would ever believe. He bears our sins and God's wrath against our sins in Himself on the cross. He is punished in our place, and because He dies for our sins, we are counted, those who believe in Him, not guilty. Not only not guilty, but righteous forever. So that is the Gospel, and so when that happens, when a person comes to understand that, God changes the heart, then they begin to be new. But this is a process of renovation. That is, the major earth shattering event is conversion, salvation, which can happen to anyone in this room today who would repent and believe today. That change happens.

But then for all of us who already believe, the change is to continue. We are a work in progress. We are like one of those reality shows, and it has just taken a long time to get the work done. This isn't happening in a week like Extreme Makeover edition. They did all that in one week, isn't that amazing? No, this is a lifetime process that won't be finished until you die, and go to be with Jesus, or until Jesus comes back. But one of the reasons that we don't see the change that we need to see is because we don't seek change the right way. We want to do it the easy way, we don't go deep enough to really produce the kind of change that God wants us to see in our lives, we have to go deeper. We have to go to the very core of our hearts. It really becomes an issue of the heart.

A lot of times, what we try to do, is kind of like just do surface things. Surface things can be impressive, but they don't last. You know if you have mold or mildew, or you have rotten sub-flooring, or rotten floor joist, putting down a nice new wood floor on top of that will look good for a while, but pretty soon you are going to be stepping through the floor, or you are going to be dealing with mildew, and you're going to have health issues. So what do you do? You have to take out the rotten wood, you have to take out the mildew, you have to remove it. There has to be a removal of all that is bad, so you can get to the heart of the matter, down to

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the structural soundness of the building. And God wants us to do that, and what we're going to see is that Verse 1 really gets at the structural root of change. That how we really change, if we are really going to change, we have to go to the heart, and it is an issue of worship, because Verse 1 is all about worship.

***Romans 12:1 ~ Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.***

Then he says:

***Romans 12:2 ~ And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed...***

And he is going to talk to us about how to do it. Really what he is getting at is that the process of change, the structural, foundational, key to change is to understand our problems of worship, and to correct them, to get to the root. Now what I want us to do, we're going to see that what he is really telling us is unpacked well through I think a couple of questions. The two main points are, number one, we need to remember, if we're going to really change, at a deep level, we need to ask this question: *Who am I?* and remember who we are. *Who am I?* is the first question. As a Christian, *Who am I?* And secondly, *What am I called to do?* And as we look at those, we are going to spend a lot of time on the second point. There are several sub-points of the second point, five actually. So the first point is going to go a little more quickly.

### 1) Who Am I?

To really change we have to deal with more foundational issues of our identity. When we are trying to deal with some sin problem, maybe you are losing your temper. You realize you shouldn't do that, you want to speak more kindly, but a lot of times what we try to do is we deal with it in a surface way. Maybe even we try to deal with it biblically in a surface way. We memorize verses like, "Be slow to speak, slow to anger. Quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger," James 1. It is a good verse to remember. Or, "The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God," also James 1. Those are great verses, and they are helpful, but sometimes they are dealing with key parts, but they are not dealing with the foundation root of anger. We've got to get below that. Why am I angry? What is making me angry? And what we'll see is that the root of every sin problem, at the

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root of every sin problem you have a worship problem. We are worshipping something other than the living God. Every area that we struggle in, that is the foundational root issue. So we want to get to the root and the Lord is showing us here that that is what Jesus wants to do, and He has called us to see ourselves in Verse 1, it is all about worship. *Who am I?* Our first point, *Who am I?* If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, who are you?

You are a priest of the living God. That is the answer. You are a priest of the living God, that is what Verse 1 says. You say, “Well, the word ‘*priest*’ doesn’t occur there.” You’re right, it doesn’t. It doesn’t say explicitly that you are a priest, but it shouts implicitly that you are a priest because the whole picture, the imagery is that of the temple, and the priesthood. He says, ***...I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice,...*** The command, or the exhortation that he offers is for you and me, who belong to Jesus Christ, to present a sacrifice. That is something that only priests are allowed to do.

In the Old Testament, if we want a great example of why when that boundary was crossed was when King Uzziah, King of Judah, who was experiencing the blessing of God in many ways in his life, took upon himself to go in and make a sacrifice as the king, but he was not the priest. He was not the one anointed, separated by God to offer sacrifices, and he lived the rest of his life out a leper. The king of Judah, God struck him with leprosy because only the priest can offer a sacrifice. So when he tells us to present your body as a living and holy sacrifice, what he is telling us is that if you belong to Jesus Christ, you are by definition a priest of the living God. That in the new covenant, in this new dispensation of what God is doing, that His people, who come to Him in faith in Christ, are priests of the living God. That is that we are supposed to be like the priests of the Old Testament, all about worship. To say I’m a priest means that my life is to be devoted to worship, 24/7, 365 days a year. That is what the New Testament teaches. This is the Doctrine of the Priesthood of the believer, that every Christian who believes in Christ is a priest. We see this here, let me just show you the passage we read earlier, 1 Peter 2:9.

***1 Peter 2:9 ~ But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD,...***

This harkens back all the way to Exodus 19, when God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt, and He brought it to Himself at Mount Sinai, He said to them, “I brought you on eagles’ wings, delivered you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself to be a kingdom of priests, to be a people for My own possession, a holy



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nation,” which Peter is picking up on that passage, Exodus 19:6. He is echoing it, he is applying it now to everyone who belongs to Jesus. But God was saying, even in the Old Testament, that in His larger plan, He intended every one of His children to be a priest. That is, to worship Him and to mediate His presence to the world. That is what we are called to do. This is a very powerful image, the more we learn about it. We are to see ourselves as priests. Now who were the priests in the Old Testament?

The priests were a tribe set apart by God, one of the twelve tribes, the Tribe of Levi, and within that you had to have the birthright to be a priest. And then if you were a priest, and you were on duty, and the duty to be a priest was so demanding, that they basically would go on for like a week at a time, and be off for a number of weeks. Something analogous to being a military reserve. You know where they go on for a weekend, they are there 24 hours a day, several days, or whatever, and then they are off. The priesthood was something like that, it required complete devotion. So they would leave their homes, wherever they were from in Israel, and they would travel to Jerusalem. They would be up in the morning, and at the temple two hours before dawn, so that they could undergo the proper washings, and rituals that went along with preparing to be the minister in God’s temple. Then they spent the entire day, until about an hour and a half, or two hours after dark, ministering. It was an intense schedule. They went home and got a few hours of sleep, came back the next day, and did it again. And everything they did was meticulously planned out, prescribed by God, and it was all to picture to us that all of our lives are to be about worship. In fact, one of the things they knew, if your week was coming on six weeks from now, that meant that at a certain point you could not be involved in a burial detail. If you lost a loved one, you could not touch that loved one. In the old covenant this was a picture to say all of life has to be about worshiping God.

Now, what this basically says to you and me is that we are called to make all of our lives about worship. We should live as the priests lived in the temple. That is that our identity is to be about worshiping Him. Who are you? You are a priest. That means you are to worship God if you are a mother at home changing a diaper, worship God as you change the diaper. If you are a mechanic changing oil, worship God as you change the oil. If you are working at Chick-Fil-A, worship God as you make change in the cash register. Everything is about worshiping God. It is not that we come just on Sunday mornings, everything is about the worship of God. Now, that is who we are. *Who am I?*

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### 2) What Am I Called to Do?

Second question, *What am I called to do?* And this is where we are going to spend most of our time. *Who am I?* I am a priest. I'm a person whose life is to be completely devoted to worship. *What am I called to do?* I'm called to worship and I worship by doing five things. Really it is one thing with four adverbs, okay? So it is five points but it is one main point and four points after that. *What am I called to do?* I am called to present a sacrifice. I'm called to present a sacrifice, and that sacrifice is my body, and it means I am called to die. So what are you called to do? You are called to die in worship. Worship is about death. That is one of the things that the priesthood teaches us, that the Old Testament worship of God was something extraordinary. I mentioned that they would get there a couple hours before dawn, and they would work all day. Remember that the offerings that the people of Israel were to bring, now these were all typical, and they were types that would show us, and teach us what Jesus was coming to do. They were shadows of the substance which is Christ. They were ways that God was baby-talking with us. He was teaching mankind, how can sinners like you and me come to dwell with a holy God. So He gave us the picture of the priesthood, and the temple, to picture that. They had five different offerings that you find in the book of Leviticus, that people could make to meet with God. They had to make an offering to meet with God, to come into God's presence. Four of those five offerings involved the death of an animal. An animal had to be killed, slaughtered, for a person to come into the presence of God.

This meant that on an average day, and we don't know exactly how many people would have shown up, but just based on a population of six million people, which is what we know, the population was roughly 6-8 million when Solomon was king, to think about now the tabernacle and the temple, when they came to make sacrifices, they had to be making these different offerings. If they sinned, they had to make a sin offering. If they wanted to make a peace offering, they would come, or if they wanted to offer a grain offering. Well, I've tried to be very conservative in my numbers, and come up with the idea that basically on a normal day, 1,200 animals would die in the temple. That would be bullocks, bulls, sheep, goats, and birds. That's almost two per minute. The priests that were serving together, there would be a team of them, and the temple in a sense was a slaughter house.

In fact, we have in the records of Jewish historians, and historians of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, that on the day of Passover when everybody was required to bring an offering on that day, a lamb, that 1.2 million lambs were slaughtered in a single



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day in the temple. One of the historians writes that the blood was over the ankles of the priests, running down the streets.

Now, if we're honest and we think about that honestly, that is somewhat appalling, isn't it? Why would 1.2 million sheep need to be killed, and then why would on a regular day, just an ordinary day, 1,200 be dying? It's appalling because God is showing us how appalling our sin is. That is a picture of what has to happen for sinners to come back to God. For sinners to come back to God is going to require something appalling to happen. And so every year at Passover, hundreds of thousands of lambs would die, and the people would experience that, and particularly the priests. Every day hundreds of animals dying, what was it saying? It was saying that our sin is so much worse than we thought, because in reality we don't think our sin is that big a deal. We don't have any conception of how our sin is to a holy God. We can get appalled at the sins of others, and sometimes at our own sins at some level, but how much greater is God's detestation of our sin? Well, it's pictured in the sacrificial system, that all of this would have to happen. And it was to call the people to ask themselves, "Our sin is so great. How can God possibly save us if this is what's required?" Because it was a picture to show us that one day something far more appalling would happen. When the eternal Son of God who was perfect and spotless, righteous in every way, when He would become sin, that was appalling, and that was what it took to save you and me, that God would have to become sin on the cross and experience hell as He hung there so that you could be saved and I could be saved.

So this tells us that worshipping God has always been about dying. To worship God there has to be death. The old covenant pictured what Jesus did once for all in the offering of His life. But for the Christian, what Paul is saying is that there's a sense in which in the Christian life on a daily basis, to worship God means you must die. Isn't that what the New Testament teaches? What did Jesus say? "If any man would be My disciple, let him take up his cross and follow Me." We have to die daily. This is what he's saying, that to worship, to really worship, I'm called to see that I'm a priest, that I'm called to worship, and that to worship, I must offer myself to God. We worship the Lord by dying to our desires, by dying to our preferences, by dying to our agenda, and by surrendering to His. We find out that in death there's fellowship with God and there is life. This is the way to life. This is the most wonderful life in the world, is to die to our sinful desires by the power of the Gospel, and live unto righteousness. That's what Paul is saying. So he says, "What am I called to do? I'm called to worship God by dying," and then there are

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four adverbs that he basically lays out here for us in the text, four adverbs that show how we are to worship God by dying.

The first is *continually*. We are to die continually. When he says **...present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice...** the word *living* I think is aimed at showing us that it's a continual, ongoing thing. It's not like a sacrifice that you make once and for all. It's an ongoing sacrifice, a perpetual sacrifice. We are to die again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again as an act of worship to God.

The second adverb is the word *completely*, and it comes from the word *holy*. So living means continual, and holy means complete, without reservation. There's nothing held back. Every area of life is to be lived out in surrender and death. What God's talking about is, how do I overcome anger? Or how do I overcome gluttony? That's one that I've been thinking about with the holidays. Isn't it amazing from Thanksgiving to Christmas, and then even past, because you've got all the candy around, how hard it is to—anybody lose weight during that period of time? If you did, let me know after church. I want to just talk to you about that, how you did that. No, but seriously, gluttony is a real sin. It's a sin that is offensive to God. How do you overcome it? Well, you could overcome it in a surface way by focusing on willpower. "I need more willpower." Or you could apply wisdom to the situation and remove the chocolate from your home. That's not a bad plan, but that's not the ultimate solution. It may be a helpful step in the right direction, but it's not the ultimate solution, not to what God has called us to, because the issue is deeper than that. It's about worship.

So what he's saying is we're to die to our false ways of worship, and turn to God, and live to a new way of worshipping Him. So gluttony, why is it that food is so difficult, and why is it that I tend to overeat? Why is it that you tend to eat more than you should? When you really think about this at a deeper level, for some of us it's probably a couple of things that I could suggest that could be the root. It may be a combination or it may be one of these. It may be that you're loving pleasure. Eating is a wonderful thing, isn't it? And it's amazing how wonderful food is and all the different varieties of food, the different tastes that God has made. And God has given these, and we're to enjoy them, yes, but why is it that we can't stop at the right amount? It's because we're loving pleasure more than we love God. Or maybe it's because you want comfort, and so you look to food to comfort you.

I found this happening to me recently. I was watching a movie and it was kind of an intense movie, and I found myself shoveling popcorn in my mouth. I went, "What am I doing? How is this helping anything?" I'm trying to help what's

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happening up on the screen. So I just kept eating. That's why we have the phrase *comfort food*. Food can give comfort, but one of the reasons that we struggle with gluttony is because we don't go to the root and realize that for me to really gain victory, I have to stop worshiping at the altar of pleasure in food, and I've got to worship God who is the true source of pleasure.

Ernie Baker said this in the seminar that he did for us a few weeks ago—Leadership and Getting to the Heart of Conflict—something he said that hit me with such profundity, even though it was something that was so obvious. He pointed out that every false worship can only be unseated by true worship. And what he said was this, like if you realize you need to turn from, we'll apply it to the illustration that I just gave with gluttony, you need to turn from loving the comfort that food brings. You don't just realize, "I've got a problem. I'm looking to food for comfort. I ought not do that." That's all helpful, but that's not sufficient. What you must do is run to God and worship Him as your source of comfort. This is what hit me with profundity. I think I sometimes get stopped between point A and point B. You get to point A and realize, "I shouldn't be doing this," but what I've got to do is actively worship God. "Lord, You are the source of all comfort. Here I am stressed about a situation and I find myself eating, but I don't want to run to food for my comfort." Look what God says in His word. "I'm your refuge, your fortress. I'm your rock. I am the God of all comfort." So you actively go to God and you worship Him for how He really meets the deep need of a heart, that you've been going to some idol to worship, and you actively make that a part of your life. "I'm going to worship You."

So when I'm eating, "Lord, help me remember that maybe I'm overeating because I'm wanting comfort. But I want to be thanking You. Even as I'm starting to eat, Lord, that You're really my source of comfort. I'm so glad that You're my source of comfort. You're a much greater source of comfort than any other comfort the world can give. Or pleasure, if it was pleasure that I feel like really is the problem, look at the Scriptures that tell us, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Well, you eat the food and you taste it, but really wait, that's just a type. That's a drop in the bucket of what it must be like to be in the presence of a God who made our taste buds, who made food to have all the varieties of flavors that we have. Isn't it amazing how you can put bitter and sweet together and make something just fantastic? You have to cultivate a taste for that a little bit. But I'm not going to go any further there. I'm starting to go off into—pray for me. I was looking to food some way I shouldn't have been. No, but seriously, when you see that God really has made it, it's His idea, He invented these things, if He's the source of so much

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pleasure, how much must it be to be in His presence, the one who made that kind of pleasure? It's a reflection of His heart. "Lord, I want *You*." And like David says, "Delight yourself in the Lord." "I want to delight in You because You are the most delightful. You are so wonderful. All that You've done is pleasurable and good.

So it's actively worshiping. That's the way is from the foundation. That's digging out the root problem. That's removing the rotten wood as you go to the worship level. And so we worship God continually and completely. Those are the first two sub-points, and thirdly, acceptably.

***Romans 12:1 ~ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.***

This is that we realize as we are doing it, as we are dying in some ways, because it hurts, and there's pain involved to stop, to deny ourselves. We need to focus on the fact that this is pleasurable and acceptable to God. "This is what God has called me to do. I'm a priest, and a priest is to offer himself." We offer ourselves. It's interesting, I noticed this in studying this passage. One of the things the New Testament shows us is that Jesus is what? He's the great High Priest. All the Old Testament imagery of the high priest was fulfilled in Jesus. He is the High Priest. That is, He is the one who makes an offering to God. But what does He offer to God? He offers Himself. He is also the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Hebrew 9 says that when He went behind the veil to make an offering, He offered His own blood. And isn't it interesting that we who are called to be like Christ are called to do exactly the same thing? We're called to be priests who offer ourselves. This is pleasing to God. When God sees us dying to ourselves, He is delighted, because He knows He can then satisfy our hearts, and He will have people who know how good it is to walk with Him.

So we're to worship God by dying continually, completely, acceptably, and finally, the fourth point, reasonably. Now, this is the word from *spiritual service of worship*. The word translated *spiritual* is actually the Greek word λογικός (logikos), from which we transliterate our English word *logical*. It comes from λόγος (logos), the word for *word*. But logic, to use the mind, to use the reason, and some of the translations actually say *reasonable*. The King James says *reasonable worship*. So the idea is that the mind is engaged, but I think what's really being said here is that he's saying, "Offer your bodies a sacrifice continually, completely, acceptably. This is the only reasonable thing for you to do." When you really look

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at how things are, there's no other logical thing to do but then to give yourself to God, is there? I mean, if Jesus died for you, how can you then live for yourself?

That's exactly what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:14. He says the love of Christ constrains us. It compels us. It convinces us. It motivates us. The love of Christ constrains us, but if one died for all, all died. It basically says we compute this out in our minds. If one died for all, then all died, and that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for the one who loved them and died for them. It's only reasonable. Jesus has given everything for us, and He's telling us this is the way to live. Can't we trust Him? He's saying, "I want you to take up your cross and follow Me. That's the way to life."

He says that, "The one who keeps his life loses it, but the one who loses his life for My sake, finds it." Jesus promises that the way to have life is to lay down your life. Has He not earned your trust? Has He not shown His love? When He gave Himself completely, when He poured out His life and His blood for you, has He not shown that He is worthy of your trust? Is there no gratitude? That's what Paul is saying. "Listen, you're to live as a priest. You're to devote yourself 24/7 to the worship of God, because it's the only reasonable thing that someone who's been bought with the blood of Jesus can do. Anything else is insanity." That's the reality, and now the problem is we live like insane people most of the time or a lot of the time, don't we? We live like it's our party, it's our life, and we do what we want to do, but that is insane. When you become a follower of Jesus Christ, you become a slave, but those who have become slaves of Jesus Christ know that they have found freedom indeed, that the ones who are truly slaves are the ones who have not surrendered to Christ. They are slaves to sin, to their passions, to misery, without God, without hope in the world. But the one who has come to Christ has found freedom. The Christians are those who continue to grow in Christlikeness, because they continue to give themselves to God in worship. False worship is only rooted out by true worship. We're going to see that Verse 2 continues to develop that theme, how we do it. But what am I called to do? I love this. Nothing can change this. No matter what happens in the world, no matter what happens in my life, or in your life if you're a child of God, no matter happens in your life, your calling is unchanged. You know what to do.

I was talking with a brother the other day and he was saying that you think about all the things you have to do. Are any of you guys list makers, list writers? It gets even worse probably in the New Year. You start making even more lists of all the things you want to do. And sometimes some of us aren't list writers. I do some lists. Patti's a better list maker than I am. She makes lists for me. You probably



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have that blessing too, some of you. No, but seriously, it is a great blessing. The Lord has given me the helper I need. But often even those of us who don't make the lists as much, we know there are so many things to do, right? Do you ever have a day that you really feel like you got everything accomplished you wanted to get done? Aren't most days like, "I meant to get this done and this done, but I didn't get those things done. I got this done and this done, but not that."

One brother was sharing with me how frustrating he's finding it that he can't possibly accomplish all that he needs to accomplish, and he made this statement. "I just wish I knew what to do." When a crisis comes, you know what to do. You've got to deal with that, and I love that the freedom that comes from knowing what to do. And one of the things we talked about as we continued to share is that the Christian always knows what to do. I'm not talking about among the 27 things that you think need to be done. The one thing that needs to be done before anything else is you need to worship God. It never changes. If you are at work, if you are at the gas station, if you are talking to someone, the one thing that I'm here to do is to worship God, to make God great in my life. And that if you start there, and if you remember this is all I'm here for, I'm here to lift You up, it's amazing how then clarity begins to come to the other 27 things. Our problem is we forget the main thing, and then we run around trying to get the other things done. Jesus says, "Abide in Me and you'll bear much fruit. Apart from Me you can do nothing." Worship is what we're called to do, and it is the way to live, the way of joy.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

*Our Father, how grateful we are for the amazing privilege as sinners, to be able to be washed in the blood of the Lamb and to possess a righteousness that is not our own, but that has been given to us by Jesus Christ. Father, let the wonder of that continue to deepen in our hearts, that the mercies of God would become more and more precious to us so that we would more willingly and enthusiastically lay down our lives for our Savior. We pray for those that are here today, Lord, that need to be born again, need to come to You, that You might grant them grace to turn from their sin and to place all of their hope in such a wonderful Savior as Jesus, to give themselves to Him. Lord Jesus, we thank You that You said, "Come unto Me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart. My yoke is easy and My burden is light." How good it is to be yoked to You, Lord Jesus. Help us to be people who walk in Your presence, worshipping You, loving You, and serving You. And we pray this in Your wonderful Name, Amen.*



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“How People Change – Part 1”

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