

Character shaped by grace

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[0 : 00] Well, if you'd turn with me to Romans chapter 12 and the first two verses. And we begin this new section of the epistle, but not of course separate from everything that's gone before, something that flows right on from all that we've been studying.

Let me begin by a question this morning. What does it mean to worship God? I think that's a question with worldwide relevance, isn't it? Because despite the vocal protests of many of the Western seculars today, the truth is that they are a tiny minority in world terms. Most of the world's population do believe in God. Or in gods of some kind. And so the question of what it means to worship God is one of vital importance all over today's world.

In fact, as we've just been praying to some people, to worship God is to go and behead and kill people. Let's be more specific then. What is Christian worship?

Real worship. That's also quite a hot potato, isn't it, in the Christian world today. I put Christian worship into Google as an experiment just to see what came up.

[1 : 35] And absolutely top of the list came up the BBC religion section. And it had a page on Christian worship. Here's what it said. Christian worship involves praising God in music and speech, readings, prayers of various sorts, and a sermon, and various holy ceremonies such as the Eucharist.

That's Christian worship according to the BBC. Well, what of course that's describing is the pattern, more or less, with various variations in style, of what goes on in most churches on Sundays.

And while it wouldn't be wrong to include that as an aspect, as one part of our corporate Christian worship, actually it's got very little, if anything, at all to do with what Paul's talking about here in Romans chapter 12, when he is explaining to us what real spiritual worship is, what it looks like and sounds like and feels like.

Because that's what most of the rest of this letter to the Romans is about. It's about worship.

Worship as faith in the flesh, if you like.

It's what faith in the Gospel that Paul's been expounding through these 11 chapters, what it really means in the cold light of day, in our daily lives. And it means, according to Paul, Christian lives and corporate church life and life as citizens of our society, that in all these ways is shaped by the sovereign, saving grace of God.

[3 : 13] You may define it like this. True worship is the obedience of faith lived out in response to God's gracious mercy and to the praise of God's glory.

As Christians and as a church and indeed as citizens. The obedience of faith lived out in response to God's grace of God's great glory.

That's why we have a great therefore at the beginning of chapter 12, verse 1. Because this isn't something additional to the Gospel that Paul's been expounding. This is simply the same Gospel but being anchored clearly in the life of the church and laying out all the implications of the Gospel so that none of us can be in any doubt.

None of us can miss them. And that continues right through to verse 13 of chapter 15. After which, Paul reverts to what I've called the letter envelope, if you like, where he speaks about his own plans and his reasons for writing and so on.

So broadly speaking, chapters 12 and 13 address more general concerns that he wants the church at Rome to think about. And then chapters 14 and 15 address some specific problems that need to be tackled.

[4 : 36] And the pattern, I think, in chapters 12 and 13 is something like a sandwich. Verses 1 and 2 is like a heading for the whole thing that deals with the individual. It's about Christian character shaped by grace.

And it's worth noting that these verses and the last four verses of chapter 13 that we read, they act like brackets. And both of these little sections urge believers not to be shaped by the present age, this world, the present age, but instead by the age to come, the day that is coming and not the night of the present darkness.

That's the brackets that hold this whole section together. Then, as we'll see in verses 3 to 13 of chapter 12 and verses 8 to 10 of chapter 13, they seem to balance each other like another layer of a sandwich.

And they're dealing with the Christian community, with the church, a church shaped by grace. As we'll see, the emphasis there is all on serving one another in love, because that's what serves the Lord himself.

And then right in the middle is two sections where the focus is more generally, if you like, on the world outside, on the Christian citizenship that is also to be shaped by grace.

[5 : 57] So verses 14 to 21 of chapter 12 speak about how we're to live among pagan people. And verses 1 to 7 of chapter 13 are about how we're to live under pagan powers.

And all of this, the real life shaping in tangible and in practical ways by the grace of the gospel, of our character, and of our church life, and of our citizenship, and also, when we get to chapter 14 and 15, of our controversies, all of this is the realm of what Paul calls spiritual worship.

Our character, our church life, our citizenship, and how we deal with conflict. That's what worship is really all about. And if that's so, then the BBC, I'm afraid, are going to have to amend their website. And lots of Christians, too, are going to have to amend their thinking, because real worship is not, in the Bible, in the New Testament, it's not about hymns and songs and liturgy, primarily.

It is all about harmony and service and love in our lives as Christian people and as a Christian church and as Christian citizens living in this fallen world.

[7 : 20] That's what worship's really about. Well, I want to focus this morning on these first two verses that are very well known, but not always, I think, very well understood.

Because real worship begins, says Paul, only when the whole character of our lives is being shaped by God's grace.

So let's look, then, at these verses, at what he's saying to us. Because he's speaking not at all about ceremonies, but about people. We're not to offer things to God, says Paul.

We ourselves, he says, are the sacrifice, the living sacrifices. That's my first heading, then. Christian worship is about being a living sacrifice.

True worship, says Paul, is life lived in response, in response to God's perfect work of grace in us.

[8 : 19] So, verse 1, And therefore, I appeal to you, brothers, in view of the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Now, Paul's appeal there is not just a suggestion.

It's an authoritative appeal. He's saying, in the light of everything I've expounded to you, in these marvellous verses about the salvation of our God, of all that he's done for you, all that he has done in you, what else could your response possibly be?

What else would you want your response to be but to offer your life in its entirety to God? In a sense, it's an unnecessary appeal, isn't it?

Because it's the hallmark of the person who has at last really understood what God's grace and mercy means, that spontaneously they'll desire, they'll need even, to give everything to God.

All for Jesus. All for Jesus. This our song shall ever be. That's the genuine response of somebody who's understood the gospel of Jesus.

[9 : 28] And it's the very opposite, isn't it, of the so-called worship of mere religion. Because that is all about seeking to try and win God's favour.

Seeking to win God's approval or God's blessings or his rewards. I think I've mentioned to you before about one of the times I was in India. And it was Diwali.

And I was looking for something in one of the local shops. And the Brahmin priest was going around all the local shops and spreading out his little cloth on the ground and putting out little offerings and little images of the gods.

And each of the shopkeepers was doing his puja, his worship. And it was all to do with trying to gain the favour of God and have his business succeeding and his family and all that sort of thing.

But you know, these guys look very, very miserable. As the Brahmin priest did their puja and as they handed over great wadges of rupees, the Brahmin priest went off looking very happy indeed with his pockets full and these poor people looked very disconsolate.

[10:39] How opposite of the worship that Paul is speaking about here. Not so different though, is it, from some of the charlatans that you get on so-called Christian TV doing exactly the same thing.

Trying to extort and extract out of vulnerable and foolish people offerings which they think will bring them blessings. But notice, Paul, real worship is not that at all.

It is not offering things to God to gain his blessings. It's simply responding and rejoicing to the rich, rich blessings that God has already given to us in Christ.

that he's poured out on us by his sheer mercy. In fact, his many mercies. By the mercies of God, he says. It's the same word that's used in chapter 9, verse 15 of God's compassion.

Where we're told that God has mercy and compassion in abundance even on those who deserve nothing but his judgment like the rebellious Israelites. And as we've seen mercy, well, it's been a constant theme, hasn't it, of these last few chapters of Romans.

[11:49] Chapter 9, verse 23, remember that we read that God bears patiently with so many rebellious people. Why? Because he is determined to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy that he's prepared beforehand for glory.

Not just for Jews but also for utter pagan Gentiles, says Paul. To all, indeed, who call on his name.

And as we read at the end of chapter 11, mercy is abundant both to disobedient Jews who have rejected the Messiah and also to utter pagans who scorn the gospel in exactly the same way.

There is mercy that extends even to drawing in such as these, persecutors like Paul himself.

Remember in chapter 5, it's true of every single one of us, says Paul, that while we were enemies, God reconciled us by the death of his Son.

Sheer, unmitigated mercy. How could we not offer ourselves to this God, says Paul.

There's people in my life who at various times and in different ways have done things for me or taught things to me that I'll never forget.

[13:16] And I would do anything for those people, anything at all. Not because, not because I, I sense some sense of crushing obligation. Not because I, I sort of have a burdensome debt that I feel I must owe to them in some way.

Not that at all. Because what they did for me or what they gave to me was freely out of their love. But I would do anything for those folk because I want to.

Because, because there's nothing I wouldn't do for them just because I love them and honour them so much because of, because of what they've given to me or done for my life.

They've shown that great kindness to me. I'm sure many of us could, could think of people in our lives that that's exactly how we feel about them. Because it's the nature, isn't it, of gracious kindness and mercy.

It's the very nature of it to elicit a joyful response, a response of love and of gratitude. Well, how much more, says Paul, when we think of the mercies of God?

[14:24] We sang last week at the end of our service the hymn about sovereign grace and love abounding. On such love my soul still ponder, love so great, so rich, so free, say while lost in holy wonder, why, oh God, such love to me, to me?

You see, true worship is the natural response of every life that is touched by God's perfect words of grace in us. And that's the sacrifice, says Paul, that God delights in, that's holy, he says, that's well-pleasing to him.

Our version has the word acceptable. That's a very poor translation. It's well-pleasing. And notice Paul says, you see, you don't need any religious paraphernalia here, no priest, no incense, no ceremonies, just the response of our hearts of love to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. The language he uses here, if you look at it in verse 1, it's technical language that comes from the Old Testament, from the priesthood, presenting, a sacrifice, the word holy and so on, the word worship as well.

It all comes from the technical language of the Old Testament. Remember in chapter 9, verse 4, Paul said that the true worship of God was a privilege that belonged to Israel, belonged to God's chosen people.

[15:54] To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law, the worship, and so on. But no longer, says Paul, does that only belong to them. That's what I've been seeing all through these 11 chapters of my gospel, he says.

All these blessings now belong to all the true seed of Abraham. He's the father of all who have faith through Jesus Christ our Lord. And so to you also, he says, belongs the true worship.

Which is simply living out in your life the faith that is now yours in Jesus Christ. Now Paul's deliberately picking up the language that he used back in chapter 6.

He says that because by faith you are united to the Lord Jesus Christ, he says, present yourselves, same words as here, present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.

You see, the dead in sin cannot worship God. Only the spiritually alive can worship God. Of ourselves, all we can do is rebel against God. until a man is converted, says one writer, which means his proud ego is broken and he takes his proper place in relation to God, he remains at the centre of his world.

[17 : 23] For God to have his rightful place means that we must take our rightful place. Only then is worship in a true sense a possibility.

Only when God is back at the centre and we're on the circumference, not the other way around. But that is what God's mercy has done. It has broken my proud ego and yours.

It's reinvaded my world. It's taken the reins once again over our lives. And it's made us alive in Jesus Christ that we can become living sacrifices by his grace.

Paul is deliberately very real and very realistic because this doctrine is not at all ethereal or mystical.

No. It's rooted, he says, in the real world of planet Earth and in the real bodies of Christian people. The second thing that we must note that he tells us is that real worship means life surrender.

[18 : 31] true worship is not only lived out in response to God's perfect worth of grace, it's lived out in a life that is realigned to God's perfect world of glory.

Notice that truly spiritual worship for Paul here is bodily worship. Present your bodies, he says, as a living sacrifice. That is, be transformed in your whole earthly existence, in all our faculties, in every single part of us, all our members, as he calls it in chapter 6, are to be transformed.

Turn back just to chapter 6, it's worth us looking there, it'll remind us of what Paul says there, in many ways it's an echo of that here in our chapter. Chapter 6, verse 13.

Present yourselves, he says, to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.

Look down to verse 19. Once your members were slaves, he says, to impurity and to lawlessness but not any longer. Now, you're slaves of righteousness. You have a new master.

[19 : 50] So you have to present your members, your bodies, to him, he says, verse 22. You're slaves of God now and the fruit that you reap leads to life and not death. A total contrast.

In other words, what he's saying is that living worship is living real life in the real world but with a real difference.

Visibly and tangibly we are different from the world. That is, the things the things that we value, the things that we treasure, the things that we devote ourselves to, the things that we think are worthy of our devotion.

That is our worship. Worship comes from the old world worship. It means what we devote ourselves to. We devote ourselves to things that we think are worthy, things that we think are worthwhile, things that we think are ultimate.

That's what we worship. and in Romans chapter 1 remember Paul laid out very eloquently the worship of the world the world he says has exchanged the truth of God for a lie it's worshipped and served not the creator but the creature created things and above all we've worshipped and served ourselves and that is given bodily life bodily expression says Paul in your life, in our human life, in our cultures in all our energies not least in chapter 1 he describes it in terms of dishonouring our bodies sexual immorality, yes but also social immorality, remember envy and greed and violence and gossip and slander and strife and all of these things that come out of our bodies but real worship, you see, for Paul means that the whole of our life then will be turned right side up again and right side out not inside out and back to front as it is by nature it won't any longer be God and his glory and his will just right out there on the periphery of our lives if it's there at all and me and my desires right at the very heart of my life because I know now that I know the truth of the gospel in Christ that this world is not ultimate that many things that in this world I once thought were worth something are simply in fact debased and dehumanizing and worthless and that means my bodily life what I do with my earthly life will no longer be conformed to that thinking of this world the real Christian's life therefore will be as different from the life of this world as night and day in fact that is exactly the language isn't it?

[22 : 41] that Paul used at the end of verse chapter 13 it's darkness and light he says and we're to walk properly as in the daytime not as in the darkness it's as radical and different as that night and day not in drunkenness and sexual immorality and sensuality not in quarrelling and jealousy but in the opposite it's the reversal isn't it?

of chapter 1 the reversal of creature worship is what true God worship is so you see that means that if you think worship is just about coming to church and hearing a sermon and singing hymns and taking communion and so on well you've missed the book completely you can do all of those things but then you go out of church and you go back to your life on Monday morning and you resume having that affair with somebody else's wife you're not worshipping God are you?

or if you just go out and have those affairs in your mind or on Facebook or through some other kind of flirting that it might be through texts and email and that sort of thing today you're not worshipping God are you?

you sing hymns and songs until the cows come home whether it's from a hymn book and double common meter or whether it's on a screen and it's a chorus repeated a hundred times with your eyes shut whatever you like to think of worship in that sense but if you go out of church and go back to work and you start quarrelling and being envious with your workmates with your family with your husband or your wife then you're not worshipping God are you?

or you just go back to reading those endless fashion magazines or car magazines or whatever it is that you drool over and wish that you had and spend your whole time thinking on how you can get your hands on those things for yourself you're not worshipping God are you?

[24 : 41] you're just worshipping yourself and coming and playing a charade on Sundays that's not real worship it's not spiritual worship because spiritual worship that pleases God is real in the flesh it's bodily worship says Paul it's the obedience of faith and that's visible and that's audible in our members in what we say in what we do in where we go or where we don't go what we spend and how we spend it and why and who we spend our time with and why and so on that's spiritual worship it's a very hard word to translate that you'll see that in our Bibles there's a footnote number six spiritual worship rational service is another translation or reasonable service it's where we get our word logical from it's as though Paul is saying true worship that is logical that is rightly understood is wholehearted life surrender it's a transformation says Paul that flows out of renewed thinking our minds he says have to be realigned to understand what really has value and worth in life don't be conformed to this world he says this age but be transformed in the whole bodily direction of your life by the renewal of your minds let me quote you from Christopher Ashe he puts this very well offered bodies he says come from changed minds for the mind is the parliament of the body where feelings are felt and assessed options are considered decisions are made and affections are determined well you see the fact of our new birth means that we are living under a new parliament new minds new control centers that have been possessed by the spirit of the Lord

Jesus Christ so chapter 6 of Romans says no longer are we under sin we died to sin and therefore we've been liberated to be servants in the new realm of God's grace and as chapter 8 says no longer are our minds therefore set on the things of the flesh but on the things of the spirit that is on the age to come and so we belong to a new realm and therefore we live under a new rule but we know very well don't we very contemporary today we know very well that regime doesn't come easily regime change there's often fierce resistance isn't there the old powers will cling on desperately against the new regime and that of course is what we've seen so often in this letter to the Romans too especially in chapters 7 and 8 the reality is that although we do no longer belong to this old age we still must live in this old age and in these sinful bodies and therefore the transformation of our bodily lives to live realigned to the perfect world of glory that is coming that transformation is a daily struggle is it not just because by nature we are so easily conformed to the thinking and the values and the ways of this world because we still live in this world's flesh don't we we don't yet have our resurrection bodies for the new world now we know that's true when did you last have to practice how to feel jealous or envious you didn't did you it comes quite easily how many of us have to train our children how to be quarrelsome and disobedient do you we certainly don't men how often do you have to practice and persevere in being drawn to the temptation of pornography for example do you have to practice that is it hard oh ladies do you have to work hard to learn how to be envious of other people's clothes or their figures or their homes or whatever else do you have to work hard to be envious of these things it comes pretty naturally doesn't it and that's why

Paul says don't let the world squeeze you into its moulds that's one translation of do not be conformed to this world it will do with great ease day after day after day unless you prevent that it will do it through the television it will do it through all kinds of the media generally it will do it through the adverts it will do it just through the chat in your staff room at work it will do it in a thousand other ways remorselessly and relentlessly squeezing us into the thinking of this passing world unless we refuse to allow our minds to be shaped by this age and instead constantly as chapter 8 says constantly by the spirit we put to death the deeds of the body and we allow him the holy spirit to daily realign the parliament the control centre the policy making centre of our lives realign it to the age to come people often say don't they they quip and they say so and so heavenly minded there no earthly use not so says

Paul here Dick Lucas says here's a plain statement that unless I am heavenly minded I cannot be any earthly good so then how are we to live lives of surrender practically being realigned to the way of heaven by the renewal of our minds well in chapter 6 verse 4 Paul describes this life of renewal as walking in newness of life and in chapter 7 verse 6 he calls this the newness of the spirit it's the holy spirit within us who is daily renewing our minds and turning our thinking back to rights so that instead of refusing and resisting God's words of life his perfect rule of our lives and instead of refusing that and turning to follow the way of this world and of self serving and autonomy instead the spirit teaches us deeply and personally in our own experience to rejoice in the will of God and to see that it is in fact his ways and his commands that are good and that are well pleasing and that are perfect not our ways and this world's ways which lead only to darkness and death in other words the spirit renews our minds and open our eyes to see that real worship means thirdly realizing that we serve a loving sovereign that true worship is life lived realigned to God's perfect world of glory when it is ruled by God's perfect will of goodness see again by nature we suppress that truth we exchange the truth of God that he is a loving creator and lord that his commands are for our bounty and our blessing we exchange that truth for a lie and we say oh God's commands are there just to deprive us of what we could have and what we ought to have and so we say I won't have any of this nonsense of your commands oh God you want to deprive me of all the things that are good for me

I'll decide what's good for me I'll do it my way we suppress the truth and we believe that lie that pernicious lie and Adam found to great cost the truth of that didn't he the command that promised life became death to him because of his disobedience and so it's been ever since and friends that is what explains the tragedy and the mess and the misery of our human world God gave human beings up to that debased thinking to the autonomy to the rule of man and the more that any human society departs from the commands of God and substitutes instead the ways of mere man the more Romans 1 verse 24 today will describe the society that ensues from that and that's why by the way that the issues that were being discussed here on Wednesday evening by the Christian

[33 : 53] Institute such as the destruction of the institution of marriage are so so important for us to be clear about the more that any society exchanges the truth of God for a lie the more that society will exchange stability and prosperity and everything else that's good in society for fragility and decline and disintegration and we're seeing that today all around about us and so it is also in our human lives says Paul as individuals Romans 8 verse 7 says that the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God for it does not submit to God's law it cannot those who are in the flesh says Paul cannot please God but you he says you are not in the flesh in fact the spirit of God dwells within you now our thinking has been turned right side up again by the spirit of God because once again we truly love God's worth and we love and we worship him and so naturally or supernaturally really we want to love and serve his commands again as we sang his commandments become our happy choice we take his easy yoke and we wear it and love does make obedience sweet because we see what Paul saw in chapter 7 of

Romans that God's law is holy not hateful that his commandment is holy and right and good and like him we delight in it in our inner being we serve it gladly with our minds even as we recognize that yes just like Paul in our flesh still we are rebels and our flesh wants to be conformed constantly to the world all round about but the more that we do walk in the newness of the spirit the more we will test and approve how good and how well pleasing and how perfect is God's way as verse 2 here tells us it's not discerning God's will again that is a very bad translation these two verses are perhaps the worst two verses that the ESV translates anywhere in the whole New Testament that I've come across it's not about discerning it's nothing about discovering

God's will here in terms of guidance that's not what he's talking about he's talking about discovering the beauty and the health of godliness as we live in obedience to God's gracious commands he's talking about the perfect and good will of a gracious loving sovereign and our understanding of that more and more taste and see that the Lord is good is what the psalmist says blessed are those who take refuge in him not cursed his is the way of life we find that so difficult don't we even as Christians to think that God's commands for us are really commands always always for our blessing for our good for our health but as we walk with him and as we love him and as we obey his words we will prove test and approve in our experience this truth that his ways are good and that they are well pleasing and perfect and that

God's law is a delight to us we discover as James the apostle discovered that the law of God is a perfect law a law of liberty he says not for crushing or cramping our lives but to liberate our lives into real joy it's in his service that we find perfect freedom now you know that's true deep down especially perhaps if you've been converted to Christ quite recently you know because it's still fresh in your mind isn't it your mind that has been transformed turned around once you know that you were a slave to sin but what fruit were you getting at that time things that you're now just ashamed of you can chime can't you with Paul's words in chapter 8 verse 21 but now you know you're freed from sin and you're freed for God's commands and you know how fruitful your life of obedience has become night has turned into day maybe for you it has been literally a huge change in some of the behaviour that Paul mentions here in chapter 13 drunkenness or sexual self-serving or quarrelsome spirit or jealousy or backbiting maybe it's a host of all kinds of other things that you now see completely differently but whatever the specifics although once you pursued these things now you hate them it's a great struggle but that struggle is the evidence isn't it that you've turned around that your whole direction of life is now not going with the world but going against the world and that transformation is the work of the spirit of God in you sometimes it's very tough often describe it like going against the crowd in the London underground

I was in London on Friday and I found myself doing exactly that trying to get up a tube platform when everybody else is coming against me you're carrying a bag and it's an absolute nightmare you're battered but that's the Christian experience isn't it when the Holy Spirit has transformed us so we're no longer conformed with the crowd but we're going against it and sometimes it feels very hard doesn't it sometimes it does feel like a great sacrifice great pain and yet for the true Christian in the midst of that there is great joy isn't there and that's a great paradox at the heart of all true Christian faith that it's as we surrender our life on the altar of true Christian faith as living sacrifices to the Lord Jesus Christ it's as we do that that we find the truth about our loving sovereign that we find a deeper fuller more abundant life than we could ever have otherwise dreamed possible what did Jesus say whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake surrenders it will find it and the more you see says Paul that you submit to God's rule the more his commands will become your happy choice the more you will test and prove it to be true in your experience

[41 : 01] I promise that that's so God's commands will become well pleasing to you as well as to him if you doubt that as a younger Christian just ask some of the older Christian warriors in the church here and they'll tell you it's true they'll tell you about the liberating joy that comes as they learn obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ one last thing just as we close it's something I think to encourage us greatly may be very important for some of us here because many of us tend to feel often don't we we feel a failure we feel that we're constantly letting God down we're feeling that we doubt that there's really anything in our lives that we could do that could be well pleasing to God and it's true as we've quoted from Romans 8 verse 8 those who are in the flesh cannot please God but listen if you love the Lord Jesus Christ you're not in the flesh he says you're in the spirit that means the spirit of the Lord

Jesus Christ lives in you and however weak however feeble you feel if you are giving your life daily to the Lord Jesus Christ if you're presenting your whole life to live for him you're honouring him and seeking to obey him in your daily walk at work at home in bringing up your kids in loving your husband or your wife in witnessing among your friends in behaving well at work in just living every day out of love to the Lord Jesus Christ if that's your life then friends your life is a sacrifice that is not just acceptable it's a feeble translation your life is a sacrifice that is well pleasing to God those in the flesh as Paul cannot please God at all but those who love the Lord Jesus and give themselves to him are well pleasing to God that's the contrast the picture of the Old

Testament offerings read it in the book of Leviticus about the aroma from the sacrifices rising up and giving delight in the nostrils of God and Paul is saying your life of faith with all its stumblings with all its mistakes your life that wants to offer to the Lord Jesus the love of your heart and the service of your bodies it delights your heavenly father when you live like that it's like a rich aroma rising up to fragrance the whole of heaven how can that be it's because I think as we learn obedience that way our heavenly father sees in us glimpses glimpses of his own holy and well pleasing son the Lord Jesus remember on the mountain of transfiguration what God said this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased where Jesus was transformed same word as he are transfigured before them as they glimpsed his true glory you see the wonder of the gospel is that all who have the holy spirit of Jesus Christ are true sons of God says Paul whom God has called and predestined to be conformed to the image of his son you see what that means every time that you and I we say no to the siren voices of this world every time we say yes to the spirit of God leading us in the commands of God however hard it is however painful it is however much a struggle every time we do that God looks at us and it's like a man looking at his little grandson playing and as he looks at him playing he sees in his face and in his mannerism something that just reminds him of his own son the little boy's father and his heart fills with joy and delight as he sees that family resemblance and it reminds him of so much love and so much that's important to him you see

God looks at us as we offer our lives to the Lord Jesus and he sees in us flickers shadows images of his own son he gets a glimpse when we're living like that of the Lord Jesus Christ himself he sees that transformation in process and the heart of God our father is filled with holy joy with heavenly joy and with pride as he sees what his son has done in bringing many brothers to glory and his heart is well pleased and he sees that reflected back out of our lives friends if that be so if living for the Lord Jesus Christ can bring joy and delight to the heart of our heavenly father to make him well pleased then be encouraged as you go out into the world to say no and to say yes to the commands of [46 : 59] God be encouraged and by the mercies of God go on presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and well pleasing to God which is your spiritual worship amen let's pray heavenly father how we thank you that in the Lord Jesus Christ we can be pleasing in your sight because we have become true sons and daughters of the living God and your love is upon us and your spirit is within us to conform us into the likeness of your son that one day we shall be like him perfect and glorious and bringing glory to you forever so

Lord encourage us day by day we pray to live for the Lord Jesus Christ for we ask it in his name amen