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Romans 12:1-2

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The reasonable Worship

The book of Romans was doctrinal from chapters 1 to 11, but the ethical teaching begins in chapter 12, which we will study today. The first half of Romans teaches in detail what it means to be saved by Jesus' all-sufficient grace through the cross. First, we were freed from the law and became God's children. Then, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, dwells in us and leads us to a holy life. And in time, at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, we will be transformed into a perfect and glorious body and inherit the Kingdom of God as children of God. This is the content of the Comprehensive Gift Set of Salvation. We have been studying Romans slowly for almost two years.

Today, we will begin practical teachings on how to live as saved people. First, today we are going to learn the important details that form the purpose of this teaching, and since we are only going to cover two verses, you may memorize them.

First, look at verse 1. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship." The "body" here refers not only to the physical body, but also to existence as a personality. It is an existence that includes the body, intellect, emotions, will, and spirituality. Also, 'the living sacrifice' is an offering to God in the New Testament age, the so-called age of grace, as was the principle of offerings in the Old Testament age. It is not animals or grain, but ourselves. This is called 'devotion'. When you hear the word 'devotion', you may think that it means becoming a pastor, a preacher, a missionary, or a priest or a sister in Catholicism, but in the concept of universal priesthood, each of us is a holy and living sacrifice. 1 Peter 2:9 says that we are a chosen people, a royal priest, and a holy nation. That's why we can worship. This is the concept of universal priesthood.

Last year, there was a seminar on church development at JTJ Missionary Seminary, from which I graduated. At that time, the founder of the seminary, Pastor Yoshihiro Kishi, invited us to give offerings and prayed for us. I was very impressed by what he said. He said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, evangelism in Japan is very difficult, and the number of workers is very small. And there are very few workers. Please put yourselves in this offering box." The audience laughed out loud when he imitated putting his head into the offering box. Are we ready to offer ourselves to God?

This is the worship we are to perform. We are to worship God with our bodies and personalities. Worship is devotion and giving our whole lives to God. The current scripture is the common translation, but the New Revised Version and the colloquial translation translate

it as 'spiritual worship' in Japanese.

What do you imagine spirituality to be? Do you misunderstand spirituality to mean power, mystery, seeing demons, hearing God's voice, seeing angels, knowing the future, and so on? Of course, there is an abundance of spiritual experiences in Christianity. But that is not the only spiritual thing. I think that the translation is better in English. It is right that the true and proper worship. The Bible says that "spiritual worship" means "reasonable," in the literal translation of the Greek word 'the logical'. The literal translation of the Greek word is the logical worship. Logical came from Logos (Word). Our Christian spirituality should be faithful to the Word of the Bible, not just mystical. It is dangerous to seek only mystical experiences without a deep understanding of the Word of Bible.

Also, we worship services in temples and churches. Why? Because we believe that God's presence is present in temples and churches. We believe in Jesus and the Holy Spirit lives in us. Therefore, each one of us is a church or temple. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies." The war between Israel and the Gaza Strip started again last year on October 7, 2023, and there were many reports in Japan about the religious conflicts in the Palestinian territories. Among them, it was emphasized how surprised Japanese viewers were to learn that Jerusalem is the holy place for Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. The commentator explained that Christianity is not that concerned with the holy places, Jerusalem. I did not know how much the commentator understood about Christianity, but really, we Christians are not concerned about the holy place. Because we ourselves are the church where we can worship God.

Now look at verse 2. "Do not conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."

So, ladies and gentlemen, what is the opposite of "reasonable worship"? It is to conform to the pattern of this world. In the New Revised Version of Japanese, it is translated "to be in tune with the world," and in the colloquial translation of Japanese, it is translated "to compromise with the world." The world's values are different from God's ideas. Romans 8:13 "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live." Our bodies, our flesh, is tainted with the values of the world. We are sinners from the time we are born as babies. I saw Kenta, my oldest son, was burning himself when Taishi, his younger brother, was born, and I realized that the original sin of humankind really exists. Not only that, I think that maybe we were taught the values of this world by our parents, teachers, and friends who have no faith. And we also naturally absorb the values of this world from the media, dramas, YouTube, etc.

This is a story from 20 years ago. A colleague of mine saw his daughter to come back home. She was the first grade of elementary school and was beaten by a boy at school. My co-worker told me like this; he taught his daughter every evening how to kick the boy who beaten her without getting caught. I was surprised to hear his teaching to his daughter. There was no idea of forgiveness in this, only the value of how to revenge. Now he is succeeded and became to be the head of the personnel department. Thus, we are living in a world that is completely different from God's will. Especially in these days, values concerning sexuality have become very confused. It must have been very difficult to live according to God's Word even in Roman times. In every age, Christians have been challenged to live uncompromisingly and not conform to the world.

We should actively "renew our minds and change ourselves" as a way of not conforming to the world. The Greek word for "mind" here is "nous," which refers to understanding, knowledge and thinking. Therefore, to "renew your mind and change yourself" means to renew your way of looking at things and your sense of values as God's will. This is really difficult, but we can do it because the Holy Spirit lives with us. **Rom. 8:27 "And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."**

I have had a very difficult parenting experience. I never once rebelled or got angry with my strict father. I have never been angry or disobedient to my ex-husband, who has been mean to me. However, only when it comes to parenting, my anger spews out like an active volcano. I realize that I am a sinner who can be angry too. But my children were sinners too. Every day parenting was not parenting but a battlefield. It was so painful that I even received counseling. But the counselor told me, "Mom, when that happens, you need to let out three breaths and calm yourself down." She would teach me how to do this. This method was one that I could understand because I had done counseling work myself before. However, it was not very effective. So, I didn't run to the counselor if I had the presence of mind to breath. Every second of daily parenting was really tense and painful. I was really overwhelmed.

But, over the years I learned a different method instead of breathing. It was to pray to the Holy Spirit. "the Holy Spirit, please help me." When I repeated this, the Holy Spirit encouraged me and gave me direction in my parenting. One day, I said to both of my children, " Kenta and Taishi, listen to me carefully. Mom, I have decided to entrust you to God from now on. I have decided to let God raise you." What was the reaction of Kenta and Taishi? "Mom, it's too bad! Why did you ask God to raise us? You have to raise us by yourself!" I chuckled at this miscommunication. They thought that God would come to our house to cook rice after I, their mom, ran away from home. After this, to my surprise, Kenta and Taishi became a little quiet! Hallelujah! The Holy Spirit! Thank you very much! Thanks to this, the

children's outbursts and my getting angry with them have decreased. I thank God for changing me and my children. Please pray the Holy Spirit, help us! I believe that the Holy Spirit will change us into the likeness of Jesus.

Lastly, Paul encourages us to approve the will of God. We all really want to know what God wants. When we decide on a school, when we decide on a marriage partner, when we get a job, when we move, etc. We make choices every day of our lives, and we really want to choose the path that will not fail or cause us trouble. We really want to know what is God's will, what is good, pleasing to God, and perfect.

What should we do to achieve this? That is to read the Bible. **2 Timothy 3:16-17 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."** It is not enough just to hear the message during worship. Please read through the Bible every day, even for 15 minutes. God speaks to each of us individually.

It is also important that we attend church to discern God's will, and that we teach each other from our brothers and sisters in the church. **Colossians 3:16 "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."** The wisdom of our brothers and sisters in the church is amazing because many of them have read the Words of God a lot and are practicing them. We should ask our church brothers and sisters to pray for us when we are lost and unsure of the path we should take, and also, we should teach and discuss with each other.

I have learned so much from Pastor Gerald and Mrs. Rie and everyone else of MJCF for the past 13 years since I was in Canada. I have had the experience of sharing, discussing, and teaching together, all your wisdom in the process of forgiving my father and ex-husband. Forgiveness was hard at first, but now, three years after reconciliation with my father and ex-husband, I have come to understand that God is pleased. And I am convinced that forgiveness was God's will. I can discern God's will in a community of brothers and sisters who believe in Jesus. I thank God for that. Please pray that we will devote ourselves as holy sacrifices before God according to the words of today's prayer, that we will be God's children who are pleasing to God, and that we will be discerning God's will.

Let's pray. Beloved Heavenly Father, thank you for today's message. I pray that each one of us will be transformed by the grace of Jesus and become a living sacrifice, so that we can worship God daily and show our glory to Him. And if there are brothers and sisters who have not yet accepted Jesus as Lord, we pray that they will make that decision today. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.