

A Picture of True Worship – Part II
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John 12:1-8
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Amen! Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 12. We are continuing a series of messages we began last week on John 12:1-8. We've titled the series 'A Picture of True Worship'. As we read earlier, in John 4, God is seeking true worshippers. He's seeking those who really from their hearts worship Him in spirit and in truth. Part of what *'in spirit'* means is from the heart. It means in the Holy Spirit as well, but from the depth of the soul, not formal, outward worship. That is not all God is looking for. It is worship that starts in the spirit, in the innermost part of the man, and it is raised up by truth, the truth of what God has done, just as we sang in that hymn. It was a beautiful, glorious hymn. *Amazing love, how can it be? That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me.* When we understand that, when we understand that in truth, when we consider that, worship wells up from the deepest part of the human soul. That is what God is looking for, worship like that, not mere outward form. So where does that come from? It comes from truth, the spirit applying the truth to the heart. So worship in spirit and in truth is what we saw in John 4.

We're looking now at this glorious picture of worship, this portrait or picture of true worship where Mary, the sister of Lazarus, in this act, this extraordinary act of love, pours out this expensive ointment, this perfume that's costly. We said last week that the cost was probably about, in today's terms, \$20,000. A bottle, 11 or 12 ounces of perfume, she pours out on the head of Jesus, and John focuses in on the feet, the anointing of the feet, rubbing the feet, and wiping the feet of Jesus with her hair.

We've outlined the text under three main headings—the setting of the act, the setting of this act of worship, Verses 1-2. We saw that fact that John makes a point out of it being in Bethany, and makes a point in his particular account, remember we mentioned last time that there are two other accounts of this same event in the other Gospels, Matthew 26:6-13, and Mark 14:3-9. Matthew and Mark give you another view of this same event. They mentioned, both of them, that it is in Bethany, but they both mention it is at the home of Simon the Leper. They don't make any mention of Lazarus, or Martha, or Mary. They mention there is a large banquet gathering, just like John does. There are a number of people there, but what Matthew and Mark tell you, they tell you whose home it is. It is Simon's home. He was formerly a leper. They don't mention Lazarus, and Mary or Martha, but John when he mentions, he says not where the thing took place, he doesn't

mention Simon the home owner, he wants us to be thinking about Mary, and Lazarus, and Martha, the two sisters of Lazarus, and Lazarus himself. As we read it you will see that, that is where the focus is. The setting shows us the ground of true worship.

Then we look at the act of true worship. We're going to continue to unpack that this morning, what she did in Verse 3. Then next time we'll look at the response to true worship which is in Verses 4-8. We're going to read the whole passage and you'll see that, that outline kind of unfolds as the narrative unfolds.

*John 12:1-8 ~ Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 3 Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, *said, 5 “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” 6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. 7 Therefore Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8 For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”*

Let's pray.

Father, we bow before You, and ask that You might, by Your Spirit, open the eyes of our minds and our hearts, that we might understand, that we might truly place ourselves under the teaching of Your word. That we might be what You want us to be—true worshipers. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

We said the ground. I want to review that real quickly. We covered the ground of true worship last week, and that is when we notice the fact that John points out, he wants us to see this event, he wants us to see in the background of what is going to happen. Lazarus is sitting at the table, Martha is scurrying about as we would expect Martha would be doing, serving. But of all the people that are serving, and of all the people sitting around the table, it is Lazarus that he points out. With those people in mind now, look at what Mary does. He reminded us in Verse 1, where Lazarus was whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Now in John's Gospel, we just

got through reading about Lazarus being raised from the dead. There is no mistaking it. He could have left out whom Jesus raised from the dead quite easily and assume we would have gotten it, but he doesn't want us to miss it. He emphasizes it again, "Don't forget about what just happened." And then, with that background, we see Mary come in, and so the point is, Mary, filled with gratitude, remembering where she was weeks before when Lazarus was dead, lying in the tomb, remembering her despair, remembering her hopelessness, remembering her sorrow. And now, seeing her brother there, enjoying his fellowship, seeing Jesus raise him from the dead, erase the corruption process that had been happening. Four days in the tomb, his body was decaying, breaking down, stinking, and Jesus called him out of the tomb. In thinking about that, and glorying in what has happened, her heart is so full that she must do something for Jesus. That is the essence of worship. That is the fountainhead of true worship. When we are so overwhelmed by what He has done, and we don't do it to earn anything, no there is no thought of that. She's not wanting something else from Jesus, she's reacting to what Jesus has already done. That is true worship.

You don't come to worship so that God will be okay with you. You don't come to worship to get His favor with you. It is the error of many, or all other religions other than biblical, faithful, Protestantism. Catholicism misses it here. "You come to church to be right with God." No you don't, you come to church because you *are* right with God. He has already made you right with God through the Gospel. You come to church if you are not yet right with God to hear the Gospel, to get saved, but the reason you keep coming back is because you want to glory in what He's done, and honor Him for what He's already done.

So the ground of true worship, we said essentially, and this is what needs to happen on a daily basis. We need to have a right apprehension, the ground of worship. For me to be a true worshiper of God, I must have a right apprehension of myself, and my hopeless condition. That is the first thing. There are two things you have to have a right apprehension of—myself and my hopeless condition, and secondly, a right apprehension of Jesus and His mighty work. I have to see myself and my hopeless condition, and in light of that, see Jesus and His mighty work. "Look what He has done." As I hold those two things side-by-side in my heart, the wonder of what He's done is magnified by looking at my hopeless condition. I was helpless, I was hopeless, there was no way out for me, and yet the Son of God found a way and did more than necessary, and has lavished His love upon me, and because of that now I must worship Him. I cannot do anything but worship Him. That is the ground of true worship. We saw that in the setting and the emphasis on the setting.

The Act of True Worship

Now the act of true worship, we're going to learn from Mary's example here. What does true worship really consist of? What is it? We really see three things. I promised you four, but I really think it is three. I have readjusted my outline this week, so some of you who are numbers people like I would be, I would notice that. "He said four, and now he said only three." I'm a numbers guy. Patti gets mad at me because, she doesn't get mad at me, but when she asks the time, "What time is it, Ty?" I'll say, "11:27." She's like, "27? Why not just 11:30? That is close enough for me." Anyway, so I would notice that it was three now, not four. I think it is three, I moved the fourth point into the next major point, okay? So we are not abandoning it, we're just moving it. But there are three things about Mary, this act that she does of pouring out this perfume and anointing the Lord. Really three facets, and don't separate them so much in your mind. It is really like looking at three facets of a diamond. It is a beautiful gem and we are looking at three different faces of the gem. It is really all one thing. It is really all this fueled desire to do something to bless Jesus.

1) You Surrender Yourself:

We saw last time, we looked at the first part of the act of true worship. We said that when we look at some of the details of the text, some of these things fall out for us. The first detail of the text we talked about last time was the cost of the perfume. Verse 3, a pound of very costly perfume, of pure nard. All of those terms, spikenard, very rare, a substance even today, the most valuable perfume substance known in the days of the 1st century. We find out later in Judas' objection that this perfume was worth at least 300 denarii. One denarius would be a day's wages for a day laborer. So a full day he gets one denarius. So 300 or so would be a whole year's salary. So we said that roughly then, to help us understand it, if you made \$10 an hour, 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year, that is \$20,000. That is essentially what this perfume would have cost, and there are perfumes today that cost upwards of \$1,500 an ounce, so 12 ounces is \$1,800. We are talking about the most expensive, the most extravagant. The idea is this is her most precious possession and she spends it all on Jesus. We see that the house is filled with the perfume. Judas is indignant because it has all been wasted, in his mind, in his unbelieving mind it has been wasted, but in reality never did perfume perform a more noble task, and a more right task than this perfume on this day.

So what we said though, the essence of worship, the expression of worship begins with a surrender, when you surrender yourself. That is what we saw and talked about last time. She is surrendering herself, she is giving everything, there is nothing she is holding back, and that true worship is when we stop holding on to things. This is where salvation begins, when we release everything, when we say, “Lord, You are Lord of my life. Because of what You’ve done I give myself to You. I come not clinging to anything else.” I mentioned last time the rich, young ruler, remember how Jesus said to him, He went after his heart and He exposed the one thing he was holding on to? He said, “Go sell all that you have and follow Me and you’ll have treasure in Heaven.” The rich, young ruler loved money and so Jesus was saying, “That is the one thing that is keeping you from salvation is your love of that one thing. Lay it down.” That is how you come to Christ.

It is also interesting, when he was talking to the woman at the well. Did you notice earlier? He went straight for her heart too when He said, “Go find your husband and bring him here.” She said, “I don’t have a husband.” He said, “Well, you’re right when you say that because you don’t have a husband right now, but you’ve had five husbands, and the man you are living with now is not your husband. This you said truly.” He is being gentle, but He is being very firm at the same time. He is going for her heart. What is He doing? He’s saying, “You’ve been looking for love. You value above everything being loved by a man. You value, you long for that, you think that is what is going to satisfy the needs of your heart. I’m asking you, ‘Lay it down right now, and let Me meet the needs of your heart. Let Me give you living water.’” That worship, true worship, salvation begins when we become a true worshiper. The Spirit of God changes us and we see whatever we’ve been holding on to, we must let go of it. “He who loves his life, loses it, but he who loses his life for My sake, finds it.”

So the act of true worship is to surrender yourself, and this is what Mary does. Now that is what we saw last time. Let’s continue to look at the details of the text to see what we learn about the other facets of this glorious act of worship that God has put before our eyes.

John 12:3 ~ Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair;

I mentioned a moment ago that it is helpful when you are trying to really interpret a passage of Scripture you consider it in context, and you think about *How does this passage relate to the surrounding books? What has been said before?* But you also, in the Gospels, you have the opportunity to look at parallel accounts. I

mentioned that this story is told by Matthew and Mark in their Gospels, and in Matthew 26, and Mark 14, what you find is as these two men report the event, Mark is giving us basically Peter's Gospel, he was a close associate of the apostle Peter. He is giving us Peter's view. When Peter and Matthew reported this event, what they did when they put it into Scriptures, they said '*the woman*', they didn't name her, they said, "The woman who came in anointed the head of Jesus." They agree on the fact that there was an anointing, it was very costly perfume, they mentioned 300 denarii there as well. It is in Bethany, but they mention Simon the Leper, and they mention the head of Jesus. They say nothing about the feet.

Now unbelievers look at these kind of things and they are always looking for a reason to not believe because that is the nature, that is what we were like before we were saved. We didn't want to believe, even if we were in the church, we didn't want to deal with things that really dealt with our hearts. So there is this willingness to not believe so they say, "Well, this is ridiculous. This just shows this contradiction." That is just nonsense, and common sense tells you that when you hear eye-witness testimony, people give what they saw, and if they are really truthful eye-witnesses...

I remember reading an account by an Englishman who had been in justice system for years, was at this point one of the chief justices in the courts of England in the 1800's, 19th century, and he began to study the claims of Christ as an unbeliever. As he tried to do it from a legal standpoint, he had been brought up in weighing evidence, the laws of evidence, and as he read the Gospel accounts this is what he said. He became a Christian, like so many who do that. This is one of the best things you can get an unbeliever to do is to, "Read your Bible, and ask God to speak to you, but read it." Well he read the Scriptures and what he said is, he said, "Listen, through years of experience, the truthful eye-witness is in his account artless, and he distains effect." What that means is he is not trying to craft a story, he is just telling you, and he is not worrying about how it relates to what somebody else has said because he knows what he saw. So he is telling you what he saw. When you get two different people to describe the same event, they don't see it exactly the same way. They see the same event but they focus on different things. Exactly what you have in the Gospels, and this is what this man said:

When I read the Gospels, I see the accounts of truthful, earnest eyewitnesses who are artless in their presentation, who disdain effect, and who are telling me what they knew for themselves to be true.

2) You Humble Yourself:

And this is what you have here. What happened? Well, how you put it together is, well, obviously if I put these two stories together as anybody would do if they were investigating a crime. “Well, you saw her put it on the head, and you saw her put it on the feet, and the whole thing was spilled out. The jar was broken. Mark tells us the jar was broken. You put it all together and what happened was she broke the jar, she poured it on His head, she lavished it on Him so that it ran all down his robes, and she then poured it on His feet as well, and anointed His feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. Now then when you understand that, understanding this whole picture, what is it that John focuses on? And why does John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, remember what he remembers, and records what he record? He wants us to focus on the feet here. What struck John was Mary anointing the feet.

The word *‘feet’* occurs twice in the passage. She anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. Now washing feet and anointing feet is an important thing in the Gospel of John, and we’re going to come back to this in John 13, I think John is doing something with that. Jesus is going to be the one at someone’s feet in John 13, doing the most amazing thing, the greatest is acting as the lowest. But here, we haven’t gotten there yet. I mean, if we were reading this for the first time, and we want to read it in some sense as if we were reading it for the first time, we see this emphasis on the feet. Someone reading this in the 1st century would say, “Mary is obviously a woman of great means. She has perfume worth a year’s salary,” and yet she is acting as the lowest, household slave.

In 1st Century Palestine, it was customary for the lowest, household servant to do the foot-washing, and if you think about it, it is just quite obvious why that would be. Who would want to wash people’s feet when they walk around with sandals on, they don’t bathe as often as we do, their feet are dry. Now if you look at any of my... No, I’m not going to go there. I’ve gone there before and was lovingly helped to see that you can spend too much time with some of these details. You know the issue, feet, nobody wants to wash the feet, but Mary has taken the lowest position. Her heart is so full of joy at what Jesus has done, and she has thrown off any concern for herself, and she is lowering herself. So the second thing we see when we see at the feet is to truly worship is not just to surrender herself, to truly worship is to humble yourself. We might say it even in a more forceful way—to truly worship is to abase yourself, to lower yourself down. That is true worship.

She is acting as the lowest slave in the house because she wants to minister to Jesus, and she's willing to lower herself down to the lowest so that she can minister to Jesus. There is no longer any desire to maintain reputation, or personal honor, or position. The greatness of Jesus has overcome all of that. She just simply wants to minister to Jesus. When you are really aware of what Jesus has done for you, if you are His child and you've been born again, something in your heart rings and resonates with that. Somewhere in your soul, when you hear the words of John the Baptist—"He must increase..." Speaking of Jesus, John the Baptist said, "He must increase. I must decrease." That is the heartbeat of the person who is being gripped by grace. He must increase. It is all about Jesus. "Look what He has done. Look what I was before I met Him. I thought I was something, but I was nothing. And now He's given me the riches of Heaven, He has lavished on me all of His riches which He's shared with the Father. He's made me one with God, He's cleansed me, He's given me treasures that I can never imagine. He has blessed me in heavenly places, He seated me at the right hand of God. How can I not worship and magnify His great name? How can I not fall on my face and worship Him?" That is really what worship is.

In fact, when you look at the Old Testament words, and the New Testament words, and even other religions, they had this part right. There is this idea, when you are worshiping, the word in Greek and Hebrew means '*to bow down, to prostrate oneself*'. That is what Mary is doing, she is prostrating herself because, "Jesus is so great, and so wonderful, that compared to Him, I am the lowest slave. I am blessed to be the lowest slave in the house. I am so grateful to just be in the house, to have the position of the lowest slave is the greatest honor that I could ever imagine because I now see rightly. Jesus is so truly wonderful. Jesus has so exceeded everything else, every other man. He is the God-man. He is so wonderful that for me just to be the lowest slave in the house is to me the greatest joy, the greatest privilege, and the greatest honor." That is the heart of worship. It is to surrender yourself, it is to humble yourself.

3) You Forget Yourself:

A third aspect, a third facet of this beautiful portrait of worship is seen when we are told that she wiped His feet with her hair. She wiped His feet with her hair. This act of true worship also means that you forget yourself. That is the third point. You forget yourself.

It was uncustomary for a woman to interrupt what was going on, the discussion that was happening. There was undoubtedly lots of conversation. Maybe there were theological questions being posed to Jesus right now. Maybe there was Q & A. Maybe they were talking about how the Old Testament is fulfilled in the ministry of Christ. They were talking about things of great value. They were celebrating the miracles, they were talking about the wonder. Maybe it was testimony, personal testimony time. Lazarus was talking, or Simon was talking, but Mary walks in, as a woman, and she asserts herself, not verbally, but by her act. This was in itself a breach of etiquette. It was certainly uncustomary to interrupt, it was uncustomary to initiate, and it was uncustomary for a woman to loose her hair in public. The unrestrained hair, as she is at the feet of Jesus, His feet have been anointed but there's too much perfume on His feet. His feet are wet, and so she wants to dry them and she doesn't have a towel. She looses her hair so that she can dry His feet and minister to Him at that moment and make Him more comfortable.

She looses her hair, and she does this, and as the people standing by must have been awestruck. I mean, this is a woman of great dignity, a woman of great means and great dignity, honored and respected in the community, and here she is acting as the lowest slave and acting in some ways—loosed hair could mean just impropriety on the part of the woman. These associations, she scorns any concern of that, because she has forgotten herself. True worship, when people are truly worshipping, it is not about them. It no longer is about me when I'm truly worshipping. It's no longer about you when you're truly worshipping. It is only about Jesus. The sense is that all that matters is that Jesus is there, Jesus must be honored, Jesus must be served, and Jesus must be magnified. That is the heart of true worship, and that is the heart that we see laid bare before us.

Now, this idea of forgetting yourself, a sense of it's a Godly abandon. Now, there's danger of being just recklessly abandoned, and there's balance in scripture, but there is a sense of beautiful, humble, surrendered abandon to Christ. "Whatever You want, Lord. I just want You to be honored." The abandon comes from forgetting who you are, forgetting what it's about, forgetting what you normally live for. We normally are concerned about what other people think about us. We normally are concerned about our reputation. We're normally concerned about the fact that someone has said something bad about us. Those are things that bite, but the person that's truly worshipping, that does not matter because they have it in perspective. True worship sees things as they are, and everything comes into proper order when true worship is happening.

Normally we worry way too much about all the wrong things. All of our passion and energy, why is it we find so much joy in things that don't matter? I mean, there are lots of good things that we over-indulge in. I'm not a hunter or a fisherman, so I can just preach on that for a little while, but I'd rather hit myself in the heart and say, "I care too much about college football." I do, and there's nothing wrong with it. I don't want to get into a big theological debate over football, or violence, or whatever, but basically there's nothing wrong with college football. Let's just see if we can agree on that. But I find it easy to think about that and to be excited about that, to get up early if need be to do that. Okay, there's nothing wrong with doing some of that, even getting up early to do that, but if things were rightly ordered, and at the moments where things are rightly ordered, that falls into its proper place. It's not such a big deal that there was a bad call and we lost the game. It's not such a big deal.

What really matters is the kingdom of God and people's lives. I mean, next year we start all over. Even if we win everything, you start again next year. What would it matter who won ten years ago? Some of us would remember, but not many of us. But it's this inordinate affection. We love the wrong things too much when we don't love Him most. When we have Him and we're seeing clearly who He is and how valuable He is, how He supersedes everything else, when we get that right, everything else falls into place, and then you can enjoy those things in His presence, which is the best way to enjoy all of His blessings anyway is to enjoy whatever it is, whatever good thing He's made, you know, the beautiful things in this world.

I mentioned the creation, someone who likes to go hunting or fishing, the solitude of fishing, the beauty of that. That's wonderful to enjoy in His presence and to praise Him even as you're doing it. The beauty of teamwork in a football game, fine, enjoy that, but enjoy it in His presence. When you realize that what matters more than anything else is Jesus at this moment, and if we're rightly focused, if we're really seeing ourselves as we are, if we're seeing Him for what He's done, we can perpetually stay in that fact of worship, that moment of worship. This is what we're called to do. I mean, when we realize that we're—when I realize, for instance, that I'm still thinking about the fact that that game happened the way it did, and it's Tuesday, and my thoughts have gone to that, what do you do with that? You could go on the Internet and see what people are saying about it. Fretting leads only to sin.

Or I could at that moment say, “Why am I thinking about that, Lord? Look at my heart that overvalues things out of proportion. Look how I distort things. Lord, have mercy on me, the sinner, that I would think about these things when there are things around me that are more important right now. I mean, there are needs around me. There are people around me, and I’m thinking about that, and I’m not thinking about You.” When I realize this, look how sinful I still am as a saved person, as a person with a new heart, still have this body of sin, oh wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me? Then I rightly see my condition. I see how awful it is. I allow His word to show me what I’m neglecting. “Look what I should be doing. Lord, save me from this. Help me,” and then I see that Jesus Christ has already done it, that He’s even the reason, that His Spirit is the One who even told me that I was doing it in the first place.

That thought, that first thought that says, “What am I doing on Tuesday thinking about this?” where did that come from? It’s His grace. Here is God beckoning me back. That’s a loving tap from a loving Shepherd hitting me with His staff, and what I need to do is say, “Look, here I am again wandering. I can’t believe I’m wandering like this.” But you don’t deal with it on your own. Turn back to the Shepherd. “Lord, I need you,” and you run back to Him, and you celebrate the fact that He’s done everything necessary. He died for the lack of priorities being right in my life. He died for that. He bled on Calvary for that. He suffered the agony that was right. Whenever we don’t have things rightly as they ought to be, we do dishonor to other people and most of all to God. We misrepresent Him. What kind of witness is it to a world that is lost and going to hell when we fret about things we shouldn’t fret about?

We see that, “Lord save me,” and then we see Jesus died for that. He paid for that, and He always was concerned about what mattered most, that every moment of His human life, His earthly human life—He still is living a human life, a resurrected Human life—so He gives me perfect righteousness. And so in that, I celebrate the work that He’s done on the cross, and now my heart truly worships Him and wants to surrender that, and I want to forget myself.

In fact, let’s think about how this works itself out in practice in our lives. I shared one right there, when we find ourselves sinning in our thoughts, you know, maybe it’s worrying about things, or it’s anger or resentment. Why is it that I keep going over the slight that I perceive that someone did to me? How is it that it’s so easy to replay that in our minds? When you do that, let God’s word have its way in your heart, and go to Him, saying, “Lord, show me what’s wrong. Here I am, and here I am doing that,” it’s so important that we not try to fix our sins like this, “I’ve got to

fix it.” No, the first step is to go to Him. “Lord, here I am. I don’t even understand how bad this is, but I know it’s not right. Help me see how ugly this is. I just know there’s something not right in me. I need You.” We go to Him in that moment and He begins by His word, and the more we’re in His word, the more we see that no, how can we harbor a grudge? If we don’t forgive our brothers, God says He won’t forgive us. This is serious business to the Lord. Forgive means release. You let it go. You don’t hold it against them. You don’t hold it on the ledger. You erase it from the ledger, and here I am holding on to that. How can I hold on to this little, small \$50 offense when I have offended You billions, and billions, and billions, and billions, and You wiped it away? So it’s that thing.

Now I want to talk about how in a couple different ways we can apply this idea of worship. Life is supposed to be all about worship. Our lives as Christians should be continual worship, in that we should worship God not just in our quiet times, not just in family worship, not just on Sunday mornings, but we should worship God all the time, every moment of every day. That’s what He intends. That’s what we were created to do, to continually reflect back to Him the radiance of His worth.

Now, how does that happen? I want you to see how the Scriptures, I think, call us to this when we look at some key passages. Turn with me to Romans 6. Romans 6 is dealing with the Christian’s victory over sin, the way that we can overcome the sins that beset us, how we can walk in righteousness. And one of the things he’s been telling us in the first 11 verses is that Jesus Christ not only came to pay for the penalty of our sins, that is, He not only took our wrath and took it out of the way, but He also has destroyed the reign or rule of sin, that is, that before you were a Christian, you were the slave of sin. Jesus said this in John 8. We saw it a while back. “Everyone who sins is the slave of sin, but if you believe in Me, if you continue in My word, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

In Romans 6, he’s saying the reign of sin has been broken. The power of sin is still present within you and you can yield to it, but when you sin, what you’re doing is you’re yielding your members as a free agent. You are yielding your members to sin. So as I mentioned earlier, if I’m thinking about something I shouldn’t be thinking about, I’m yielding my mind to sin. If you’re getting angry and yelling, you’re yielding your members to sin. You’re yielding your mind. You’re yielding your mouth. You’re yielding your members. But you’re doing it as a free agent. I mean, you have the power not to sin, in Christ. It doesn’t feel like that, though, does it?

Sometimes when you've really got a sin pattern it doesn't feel like you're free, but the Bible tells us that you are, and I think this idea of worshiping is how you take the reality of that freedom that really is ours, and you make it real in your life by God's grace. The way it happens is this: Romans 6, look at 11 to 13. He says:

Romans 6:11-13 ~ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness;...

Now, what he's saying is that when we sin as Christians, what we're doing is we're basically just giving the keys to sin. You can drive. That's really what sin is. We feel like we can't help it. We just have to. No you don't. You're actually giving the keys, or the image in the passage, actually. When he says, "When you present your members as instruments of unrighteousness," there's a little footnote in the NASB that says the word *instrument* means weapons, that when you sin, when I sin, what I'm doing is I'm giving the members of my body, my imagination, my mind, my body, my vocal cords, I'm turning them over to sin, the power of sin, to use as a weapon.

It's like an intruder coming into my house, and he comes in and he wants to hurt my family but he forgot his gun. I say, "Well, don't worry about it. I've got one right here. You can use mine." That's preposterous, but that's what we do when we sin. Sin who wants to destroy us, Satan, working with sin, wants to destroy us, wants to destroy everything that God loves, the kingdom of God. When sin, when we're tempted, he's basically saying, "Can I borrow your gun?" and when we sin, we say, "Yes." Every time we sin that's what happens. That's what really has happened. It doesn't feel like it, but it doesn't matter what it feels like. That's what God says. Now, he says, "Don't do that. Stop presenting your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but..."

Romans 6:13 ~ ...but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

When you look at this verse, one of the things that you see is that there is this—stop doing this and start doing that. Stop presenting your members to sin. Start presenting your members to God. But there's also something I didn't expect, or you shouldn't expect when you read it, because you expect it to be a parallel. Don't present your members to sin. Do present your members to God. But there's something in the middle.

How is it that you begin to present your members to God is that you present yourselves to God. I think what he's saying here is this is an act of worship. When you are tempted to sin and you feel all of that inertia pulling you to sin in whatever sins that you struggle with, you're being tempted to give your members to sin, and how do I stop doing this and do the right thing? How do I stop being angry and start being kind? How do I stop wanting to covet and start wanting to serve and give? How do you do that? Well, the turning point, the hinge, is when you present yourself to God, that is, you worship. You realize that what needs to happen here is I need to worship. I'm realizing I'm struggling, I'm getting sinfully angry in some situation, and I'm getting angry because I'm looking out for my own interests, and other people don't look out for my interests, and I am appalled at that? Aren't you? That they don't look out for your interests? Isn't it funny how we do that? When we pull out into traffic, it's okay if we pull in front of somebody, but when somebody pulls in front of us, it's not. We look out for our interests. How can I now look out for the interests of others? The answer is worship.

In fact, in Philippians 2, another passage you can look at later, he says, "No longer look out for your own interest, but look out for the interest of others." How can I in the middle of a conflict stop looking out for what I want and start looking out for what you want? "Lord, You said that." You know what he says right after that? He says:

Philippians 2:5 ~ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,...

He basically says the way you stop looking out for your own interest and you start looking out for the other's interest is you worship. Look at Jesus. In the conflict, look at Jesus and see Him leaving the glory of heaven, who although He existed in the form of God, look how He looked out for our interest, not His own. He didn't regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but He emptied Himself. He took upon Himself the form of a slave, and being found in appearance as a slave, He became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. So when we look at Jesus and we see what He has done for me, now that is the key. I see His glory. He's done that for me. He's looked out for my interest. He didn't look out for His own interest. Look how He looked out for mine. I was hating Him. I was despising Him, and yet He died for me. And when you become to be enamored with Jesus in the middle of a relational conflict, what happens is you find yourself falling at His feet. You find yourself surrendering.

Whatever my concerns were that I had, sometimes it seems so just, doesn't it? *She should not be treating me this way. He should not be treating me this way.* It's just wrong. Justice requires it. Anybody would see that I'm right in a situation. The other person's thinking much the same thing, and even if you're 80% right or 90% right, what needs to happen is you need to start looking out for their interests. It doesn't mean you just let them walk all over you. No, it means that you do what God wants. You stop fighting and you start blessing, and the way you do that is you look at Jesus. He didn't look out for His interests. He lavished, He poured out Himself for me, and when I look at that, I must worship Him.

How do you do that? You fall at His feet, and when you fall at His feet, what you find is if you want to really bless Him, you fall at the feet of those around you. That's what He says in the next chapter, John 13. "I washed your feet so that you can follow My example by washing one another's feet. Be just like Me and take the lowest position, and look at the need of the person that you're in conflict with and bless them. Serve them, and when you're doing it, you're doing it to Me." Do you want to bless Jesus? If your heart is full of wanting to bless Jesus, if you're thinking about what He's done for you, how can you bless Jesus? How can I bless Jesus? We can bless Him by humbly serving those around us, by lowering our self down. And as we're doing it, as we're then saying, "Wait a minute, help me understand what you're saying here. What is your concern?" and, "Lord, help me understand what the need is here. How can I bless?" As I'm doing that, everything changes.

The way to make it so beautiful is that when I'm doing that, if I'm able to think, "Lord Jesus, this person over here at this moment, they're not honoring You either, and I think they're mostly wrong." We normally think we're mostly right, don't we? If we say take percentages, usually you're going to say at least 60% you're right. "Mostly they're wrong, but You've told me that You want me to serve them and hear their interests, and they have needs. Lord, help me serve their needs, and as I serve them, even though they don't deserve it, You deserve it, and as I humbly listen to them and try to understand and now make peace and really try to do what honors You, and help them think about what honors You so that we really end up doing what's right, I am doing it all through the process, as hard as it is, as painful as it is," because it's painful. As painful as it is, what I'm doing is I am lavishing perfume on Jesus' feet. That is what I'm doing right now. "Lord, I'm lavishing this on Your feet. You are worthy. The reason I'm taking the low road right now is because You are worthy. I want You to be pleased. I want You to be honored."

What matters more than anything else is that Jesus Christ be praised, that Jesus Christ be honored, that Jesus Christ be magnified. That is what I want to happen in this moment. When that happens in relational conflict, when we want Him to be praised, and Him to be honored, conflict evaporates and real ministry happens. Sometimes we've got to deal with somebody's real sin. There's really something you're not seeing here that you need to see, but it's so different. Now we're doing it as a humble, loving act, not a judgmental, "What are you doing? Why are you doing that?" That's how we apply worship to life.

In the area of sin when we're wanting to sin, when we feel like we want this but we know that we ought not have it, and we know that God doesn't want us to have it, what we do is we look at Him dying for us, paying for us, giving us a heart—Lord, I need a heart that doesn't want this, and I love You for doing everything necessary. Jesus, You don't want this, and so I surrender to You. I lay it down to You. I give myself to You in this moment. I can't overcome this, but I give myself to You. I give my members to You, and as I'm focusing on Him, suddenly sin is becoming less, and less, and less, and less attractive, and what really is the most beautiful, desirable thing is to minister to Jesus, and realize that when you say no to sin, what you're doing is you're anointing His feet. You're not earning anything towards your salvation. He's already done all of it, but when you say no to sin and yes to Christ, you are bowing down and anointing His feet, and that act fills the whole house with the aroma of beautiful perfume. God sees that as a sweet-smelling aroma.

This is what we have to do is take the real nuts and bolts of everyday life which we try to think about on the horizontal, and make it vertical. This is a matter of worship, much more important than I would normally think. It's an opportunity. I have an opportunity before me. I mean, think about it. Wouldn't you have liked to have been Mary? We were talking last week after the service, and somebody said, "You know, if you really think about it, I would pay a year's salary for my brother if he died, to be brought back to life. It seems a small thing." I'd pay ten year's salary to have that happen. Wouldn't you? When you see things rightly, it changes everything, and when we see what He has done, when we see what He really has done and we're keeping that before us, it puts everything in perspective. He is worth letting aside the sin that so easily besets us. He is worth me saying no to sin and yes to Him. He is worth me humbling myself and dealing the relational conflict that I have in a Godly way. He's worth that, and as we worship Him through it, we're going to see Him—His kingdom is going to be extended and His glory's going to be made known, and everybody's going to be blessed with the fragrance of His peace as we worship Him.

It all happened because Jesus Christ left the glory of heaven, He did not regard His own interests, that He came for us and us alone, and He laid down His life at Calvary. He was treated as if He had lived our wicked, sinful lives. The song we sang earlier said He was treated with the wrath of God so that we could be treated with the grace and mercy of God. God sees us as He sees Jesus in His righteousness. That is worth worshiping Him for.

Let's pray together...

Father, we acknowledge again our great neediness, our forgetfulness of everything but ourselves. We're so glad that we are told in Your word again and again that You are the Father of compassion. You are rich in mercy, and through Jesus Christ You have lavished Your grace upon anyone who will repent and believe. We pray for those here today that need to come to the end of themselves and cast themselves upon You, Lord Jesus. Grant them grace to let go of everything else and to realize that You truly are the pearl of great price. You are the most wonderful treasure. You're more wonderful than our minds have ever been able to conceive. And Father, for those of us who are Your children but who are forgetful children, we ask that You might continue to do what is necessary to purify and purge our sin and purify our motives and our hearts. Give us eyes to see more clearly the one thing that really matters, and make us more faithful, more diligent worshipers of Christ. We pray this for His glory and in His Name, Amen.

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