

OFFERING ACCEPTABLE SERVICE TO GOD

WHY/HOW WE SERVE GOD IN REVERENCE AND AWE



I APPEAL TO YOU THEREFORE, BROTHERS, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, TO PRESENT YOUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY AND ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

(ROMANS 12:1 ESV)

PART ONE: WHY?

BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND FROM HEARTS OF
GRATITUDE WE OFFER TO GOD ACCEPTABLE SERVICE
WITH REVERENCE AND AWE ...

1. Because God loves us ... he tempers and purifies us to walk in the light so we then serve and worship him in reverence and awe.

- (Hebrews 12:28–29 LSB) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE.

A. **God is love** and he made his love known to us that we might live through him.

- (1 John 4:8–9 ESV) Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

B. **God is light** so to serve and worship him in reverence and awe we must walk in the light.

- (1 John 1:5–7 ESV) This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

C. **Our God is a consuming fire** and he uses his word to expose to us the evil thoughts and dark intentions of our hearts so that he may cleanse and purify us so that we may walk in the light in fellowship with him.

- (Hebrews 4:12–13 LSB) For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are uncovered and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we have an account to give.

By grace we have been saved and by grace we offer to God acceptable service. Our holy God cleanses and purifies his vessels producing in us a thankful spirit from which flows a desire and a determination to offer to God acceptable service and worship. He uses the sharp sword of his word to pierce our innermost being to uncover and lay bare the sin and darkness of the thoughts and intentions of our heart. The Holy Spirit convicts us of this sin. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from this sin. Amen and amen.

2. Grace is the driving force behind our gratitude—grace beginning to end by which we offer acceptable service and worship to God.

A. God causes grace to abound to us in every good work—grace begets abounding grace.

- (2 Corinthians 9:8 ESV) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

B. The reality is that when we work hard it is the grace of God that is working with us.

- (1 Corinthians 15:10 ESV) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

C. When we obey God's will, it is God's good pleasure to work in us further obedience to his will.

- (Philippians 2:12–13 ESV) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

3. When we do well and offer acceptable service and worship, God lifts us up in service and worship.

- (1 Peter 5:6–9a ESV) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith.

A. Humbling ourselves before God is a first defense against falling for the schemes of the devil.

- (Genesis 4:6–7 ESV) The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”

B. When we are like Cain and do not do well and our worship is unacceptable, and we have left ourselves vulnerable for sin to rule over our us.

Genesis 4: 7 ... acceptance – the act of accepting with approval; the idea is that in acceptable service we are lifted up, elevated, exalted in God.

- (Genesis 4:7a LSB) If you do well, **will not your countenance be lifted up** [i.e. accepted and approved]?

C. When we offer worship to God that is acceptable, God then lifts us up in our relationship with him.

4. **Observe the complementary role we have with God regarding our ability to offer to God acceptable service and worship in the following verses.**

A. We offer to God acceptable service and God works acceptable service in our lives.

12:28 and 13:21 ... acceptable ... translated “acceptable” in 12:28 and “pleasing” in 13:21 is the same word and the same concept/meaning. The word is εὐαρεστος [euarestos] and means well-pleasing – in a manner giving pleasure and satisfaction; in a manner well pleasing to one, acceptable.

B. In 12:28 we do God’s will—offering to God acceptable service.

- (Hebrews 12:28b LSB) ... let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an **acceptable** service ...

C. In 13:21 it is God doing his will in our lives working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.

- (Hebrews 13:20a, 21 ESV) **Now may the God of peace ... equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight**, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

PART TWO: How?

WE CONTINUE IN GRACE AND SHOW GRATITUDE IN OFFERING SERVICE AND WORSHIP TO GOD BY OBEYING GOD’S WILL IN OUR DAILY LIVES.

BELOW ARE OUR MARCHING ORDERS ...

1. **Let love of the brothers continue, 13:1.**

- (Hebrews 13:1 LSB) **Let love of the brothers continue.**
- (Romans 12:10 ESV) **Love one another with brotherly affection.** Outdo one another in showing honor.
- (1 Thessalonians 4:9–10 ESV) **Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you**, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, 10 for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. **But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more.**
- (1 Peter 1:22 ESV) **Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.**
- (1 Peter 3:8 ESV) Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, **brotherly love, a tender heart**, and **a humble mind.**

2. **Do not neglect to show hospitality—love and kindness—to strangers, 13:2.**

- (Hebrews 13:2 LSB) **Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers**, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

The point is that there may be more to the people we meet than meets the eye. It is possible that when you sit in church, the person next to you will really be an angel, but he or she is likely something even more wonderful. There beside you in the pews is probably a saint of God in light. Across the room are those destined to serve as priests and kings in the very presence of the living God, who are now being prepared for their glorious raiment. To meet an angel might be wonderful, but in the church are those whom angels are “sent out to serve” and “who are to inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14). There is a work going on in their lives that angels wonder at and rejoice to see.

C. S. Lewis in his essay “The Weight of Glory”

remarked on what an extraordinary thing it is to live among those in whom eternal destinies are being worked out:

The dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.... There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.... It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.

[Phillips, R. D. (2006). *Hebrews* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; pp. 589–590). P&R Publishing.]

A. Hospitality means to show love and kindness to strangers; to welcome guests or strangers.

- (Matthew 25:35 ESV) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, **I was a stranger and you welcomed me.**
- (Romans 12:13 ESV) **Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.**
- (1 Peter 4:9 ESV) **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.**

3. Remember the persecuted and mistreated, 13:3.

- (Hebrews 13:3 LSB) **Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves also are in the body.**

4. Hold marriage in honor among all, 13:4.

- (Hebrews 13:4 LSB) **Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled, for the sexually immoral and adulterers God will judge.**

5. Be content with what you have, 13:5-6.

- (Hebrews 13:5–6 LSB) **Make sure that your way of life is free from the love of money, being content with what you have;** for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," 6 so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

6. Remember those who spoke the word of God to us and stay true to the gospel they preached, 13:7-14.

- (Hebrews 13:7–14 LSB) **Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you;** and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. 8 **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** 9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; **for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace,** not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. 10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no authority to eat. 11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. 12 **Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.** 13 So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. 14 For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the one to come.

7. Through Christ continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, 13:15-16.

- (Hebrews 13:15–16 LSB) **Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God,** that is, the fruit of lips that confess His name. 16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

8. Obey your leaders and submit to them, 13:17.

- (Hebrews 13:17 LSB) **Obey your leaders and submit to them—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account—so that they will do this with joy and not with groaning,** for this would be unprofitable for you.

9. Pray for your leaders that they may have a clear conscience and stay the course of acting honorably in all things, 13:18-19.

- (Hebrews 13:18–19 LSB) **Pray for us, for we are convinced that we have a good conscience,** desiring to conduct ourselves well in all things. 19 And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.