

## SF 1.14.1 – The Discipline of Worship in Serving Others

---

**Most Spiritual leaders tend to focus on worship as a means of pressing into God...** James 4:8-9 "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands [what you do], you sinners; and purify your hearts [what you think & desire], you double-minded."

**I asked my friend and Pastor Chuckk to review my thoughts on worship, and he suggested that I include the following element of "service" as a form of worship connected to the Greek word - λατρεύω.**

**The text is Romans 12:1-8 – the idea is that we are now priests offering the service of a living sacrifice our whole selves (an integrated life) as worship. He suggested that such serving offered to God in a way similar to that previously done by the Levitical Priesthood as they served in the Temple. Our service discussed in this passage at v6 is connected to our Spiritual Gifts as worship in verse 2:**

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—**this is your spiritual act of worship**. Do not conform any longer 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. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

### 1. λατρεύω and λατρεία in the New Testament.

#### 1. λατρεύω.

a. Occurrences – λατρεύειν occurs in the NT 21 times: of which 8 are in Luke (Luke 1:74; 2:37; 4:8; Acts 7:7, 42; 24:14; 26:7; 27:23), 6 in Hebrew. (8:5; 9:9, 14; 10:2; 12:28; 13:10), 4 in Paul (R. 1:9, 25; Phil. 3:3; 2 Tm. 1:3), 2 in Rev. (7:15; 22:3) and 1 in Matthew (4:10). Three of these verses derive from the OT (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8; Acts 7:7). The particularly strong usage in Hebrews corresponds to the significance of OT Temple Worship ideas in this epistle.

b. The Purely Religious Character of the Word as Determined by the LXX. The influence of the LXX may be seen in the fact that the word never refers to human relations, let alone to secular services. The ministry denoted by λατρεύειν is always offered to God (and the same word applies to heathen gods: ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα R. 1:25; τῇ στρατιᾷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, Acts 7:42), thus it applies both to the OT and the NT. λειτουργεῖν, λειτουργία always enables us to detect the broader potentialities of word usage found in non-biblical Greek, but not so in either OT nor NT of word λατρεύειν.

c. λατρεύω is used in the context of Sacrificial Ministry. The obliteration and or obfuscation of the Distinction between λατρεύω and λειτουργέω in Hebrew according to LXX usage, the primary reference of λατρεύειν is to the sacrificial ministry which is to be offered to Yahweh in contrast to other gods. This usage recurs in Acts 7:7 (cf. Ex. 3:12); 7:42 (cf. Jer. 7:18 LXX); also R. 1:25. A similar reference is to be seen in Hebrew. at 8:5; 9:9; 10:2; 13:10. But the distinction between λειτουργεῖν (priestly sacrificial ministry) and λατρεύειν (cultic worship generally), which is so strict in the LXX except at 1 Εσδρ. 4:54, is now obliterated. For in Hebrew 8:5 and 13:10 λατρεύειν refers primarily to the sacrificial ministry of the priests. According to 8:5 the earthly sacrificial ministry in the tabernacle is “ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ τῶν ἐπουρανίων λατρεύειν”... since the true Tabernacle is in heaven. Similarly, the priests are described as “οἱ τῇ σκηνῇ λατρεύοντες” in 13:10. The more precise meaning of the verse is contested. It need not concern us here. For there is in any case no doubt that the phrase has the priests in view and not the Jewish community in general, no matter what deductions are made from what is said about the priests. As such, it applies primarily to the leadership. Again, the λατρεύειν of Hebrew 9:9 refers, not just to participants in the cultus, but to the priests who offer sacrifice. This is clear from the fact that in the λατρεύων of this verse there is further reference only to the ἱερεῖς τὰς λατρείας ἐπιτελοῦντες of 9:6. The λατρεύοντες in Hebrew 10:2 are also the priests. The LXX translators would certainly have chosen λειτουργεῖν in all these cases, cf. the way in which the λατρεύειν of 8:5 is taken up in the λειτουργία of 8:8, cf. also 10:11.

d. λατρεύω of the Ministry of Prayer – in the other NT verses the reference of λατρεύειν is to the cultic worship of praise and prayer which all of God’s people may offer, or else the word is used in an extended, loose and almost figurative or spiritualized sense to include every form of divine worship.

In the sense of adoration λατρεύειν occurs in the temptation story (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8; cf. Dt. 6:13), where it stands in antithesis to the προσκυνεῖν demanded by the tempter; cf. also Rev. 7:15 (of the blessed martyrs who serve God day and night in His temple) and Rev. 22:3. But the unwearying prayer of Anna in the temple (Luke 2:37) and the incessant supplication of Israel for the fulfilment of the promise (Acts 26:7) are also called λατρεύειν, and indeed in the second of these two verses the word simply means “to pray.” The verses are worth noting because the dative to denote the recipient is absent. The word is thus used here as a tt. for the ministry of prayer.

e. λατρεύω in a Generalised Figurative Sense – The comprehensive use of λατρεύειν for the whole conduct of the righteous towards God is found first in Luke 1:74. Zacharias confidently awaits the time when God will grant that, undisturbed by the oppression of enemies, we may λατρεύειν αὐτῷ ἐν ὁσιότητι καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ. The worship of God to which he here looks forward with yearning is impossible without a true holiness and a keeping of the commandments which is valid in God’s eyes too. λατρεύειν then has the same comprehensive sense in Acts 24:14, where Paul gives the assurance that he serves the God of the fathers. Though this λατρεύειν now takes place κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἣν λέγουσιν αἵρεσιν, i.e., according to the standard of the Gospel, this does not imply any loss of fidelity to the Law and the prophets. Part of the service is that he strenuously exerts himself (ἀσκῶ), ἀπρόσκοπον συνείδησιν ἔχειν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους διὰ παντός. Cf. also Acts 27:23 (τοῦ θεοῦ οὗ εἰμι, ᾧ καὶ λατρεύω, ἄγγελος) and 2 Tm. 1:3 (χάριν ἔχω τῷ θεῷ, ᾧ

λατρεύω ἀπὸ προγόνων ἐν καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει). Hebrew. 12:28 may be cited in this connection. We receive, says the author, an incorruptible kingdom. This pledges us to gratitude (ἔχωμεν χάριν), δι' ἧς λατρεύωμεν (vl. λατρεύομεν) εὐαρέστως τῷ θεῷ, μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους. A manner of life which is pleasing to God, and which is sustained both by gratitude and by a serious sense of responsibility—this is Christian τῷ θεῷ λατρεύειν. The word thus serves as a transition to the admonitory section which follows (c. 13). Perhaps the λατρεύειν of Hebrew. 9:14 also belongs here. The blood of Christ will purge our conscience from dead works εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι. Purging of the conscience implies remission of sins (cf. v. 22). One possible rendering is that the Christian now has the ability to come to God, to approach Him, like the priest in sacrificial ministry. In this case there is a figurative reference to priestly λατρεύειν. But another possible meaning is that the goal and result of this purging of conscience is a new manner of life which is true λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι (cf. 12:28). In this case the term is used as in Luke 1:74.

Romans 1:9 has in view the same active religious service except that here the reference is specifically to Paul's missionary work. In Romans 1:9 Paul, asserting his unceasing remembrance of the Roman Christians in prayer, calls God to witness, ᾧ λατρεύω ἐν τῷ πνεύματί μου ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. The conclusion of this observation can only mean that the apostle's service is rendered in the sphere of preaching the Gospel of the Son of God (ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ as in 2 C. 8:18; 10:14). Hence Paul refers to his missionary work. He calls this a λατρεύειν, an act of religious service, of the worship which he offers to God. Worth noting is the addition ἐν τῷ πνεύματί μου. Paul obviously does not mean that his missionary service is rendered inwardly. Does he mean, then, that his service is rendered "through his spirit," and by "his spirit" does he mean the Holy Spirit imparted to him, i.e., the Spirit of God? But why does he not say this? And what is the point of describing his apostolic office as a charisma in this context? Another suggestion is that he is emphasizing that he does this work with his whole heart. But would he express this in the phrase in question? Perhaps two thoughts are present, first, that Paul's λατρεύειν, or service, is rendered outwardly in his missionary work, and second, that it is also rendered in his prayer life, the chief concern of which is, of course, the progress of his missionary work. In this case there is a measure of oscillation in the term λατρεύειν. Paul serves and worships God; he renders divine service, actively in the proclamation of the message and inwardly in intercession for the churches and for the progress of the Gospel. This thought would supply the reason for Paul's appealing to God as witness of his intercession. As an inner process, this is concealed from the congregation but well known to God.

Finally, in Phil. 3:3 we again find λατρεύειν in a broad metaphorical sense in which it comprises the whole of Christian existence. Paul contrasts himself and Christians with the Judaizers, for whom he has very sharp words. We are the true circumcision of οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ (vl. θεῷ) λατρεύοντες. They put confidence in the flesh. Their whole worship of God is in the flesh. Christians worship God through the Spirit of God. This is not to be restricted to prayer. It includes all that to which we are impelled by the Spirit. The Christian life fashioned by the Spirit is true λατρεία.

λατρεύειν means to worship cultically. In the OT its primary reference is to the sacrificial cultus. In the NT, however, this is almost completely secondary, except in Hebrew. It gives place to the ministry of prayer, and then more broadly to the total view according to which

the whole life of the Christian is fundamentally brought under the concept λατρεύειν, so that he alone seems to be capable of a λατρεύειν, a worship of God, which is worthy of the name. The cultic concept is now spiritualized.

### 2. λατρεία.

Of the five occurrences of this word in the NT, three refer to the sacrificial ministry. In Romans 9:4, with the giving of the Law and the promise, λατρεία, the sacrificial cultus, is one of the religious advantages which accrue to Israel. The δικαιώματα λατρείας of Hebrew. 9:1 are cultic ordinances. In Hebrew. 9:6: οἱ ἱερεῖς τὰς λατρείας ἐπιτελοῦντες, the ordinances are again those of the sacrificial ministry. In Jn. 16:2: ἔρχεται ὥρα ἵνα πᾶς ὁ ἀποκτείνων ὑμᾶς δόξῃ λατρείαν προσφέρειν τῷ θεῷ, the word λατρεία virtually means sacrifice, as shown by the verb προσθέρειν. The concrete idea of sacrifice seems always to cling to the noun no less than to the verb. This is also true in the last verse (R. 12:1), though the use here is metaphorical. The service which Christians are to offer consists in the fashioning of their inner lives and their outward physical conduct in a way which plainly distinguishes them from the world and which corresponds to the will of God. This is the living sacrifice which they have to offer. Using a term which was current in the philosophy of his day, Paul describes this sacrifice as a λογικὴ λατρεία, a service of God which corresponds to human reason, in which, however, divine reason is also at work. If man listens to the voice of reason, he must acknowledge that this is the true service of God. The biblical history of the cultic term λατρεία reaches its climax in this interiorisation, which is also the most comprehensive exteriorisation, and which takes up again the initial prophetic statement in Dt. 10:12 ff. The saying of Paul in R. 12:1 ff. is the crown of this whole development.