

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction	2
Chapter One	
The Mystery of Worship	8
Chapter Two	
The Meaning of Worship	12
Chapter Three	
The Method of Worship	16
Chapter Four	
The Enemies of Worship	31
Chapter Five	
Examples of Worship	49
Chapter Six	
Experience of Worship	71
Chapter Seven	
The Results of Worship	83

Worship

From the very beginning of creation, man has been actively involved in worship: God, self, money, power, the list is endless. Man by his very nature is a worshipper. The object of worship may differ from person to person and place to place, but the practice is often very similar. God has placed within each of us the need to worship, and it is His desire that all men worship Him. There lies the problem, man by his nature is in rebellion to God, does not seek God on his own and turns his worship to other areas. This rebellion began with Satan when he tried to replace God and has been an ongoing problem with mankind ever since.

In Matthew 4:10 we have the account of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness by Satan. The goal of Satan was take worship away from God and become the one being worshiped. Jesus gave a very clear response to Satan's offer, "...*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall you serve.*"

God desires worship, but it is not to be blind ignorant worship; John 4:23, "...true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him." To get to the place where one actually worships in spirit and in truth involves the emotion, the intellect, and the will. It is necessary to get the emotion, intellect and will under the control of biblical principles, guidelines and limitations, which will result in acceptable praise, honor and glory being given back to God.

The worship we find in the Old Testament is different from the New Testament, but there are some factors that remain in place for both time periods. Looking at worship from a New

Testament perspective, we are very quickly aware of the association of worship and the church. Down through the years since the Day of Pentecost worship has been identified with a place, a building we call the church. It appears that for the last two thousand years most professing Christians seek to satisfy the God-given need to worship by entering into a physical church building. However, today we find many shying away from what we call the organized church and the building associated with it. Today, many are seeking to worship God in ways that simply satisfies their personal idea of worship. While changes are clearly taking place, the need for worship has not changed. The church building is still the place that most see as the place to organize, come together and collectively offer worship to God. It is in the church building that Christians seek to draw close to God, learn about Him, and in some cases, serve Him.

The way an individual worships is in direct relationship to how that person sees God; his concept of God will determine his acts of worship. This can be seen in the variety of churches that exist today. While God has instituted the church, man has tried over the years to fashion it after his own likes and dislikes, altering the purpose and in some cases becoming like the Pharisees of old and perverting the message. The result is often the destruction of biblical worship and replacing it with something that fails to honor God and simply honors men. From the very beginning of the church, it has suffered from those who would pervert and alter the worship of God to fit their liking. The church has endured persecution, bigotry, jealousy, and false teachers. The church has been split into east and west, liberal and conservative, Pentecostal and traditional, all in the attempt to worship God. But, through all of this the church has continued to grow and to bear witness to the world of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even Jesus recognized the attacks, but was very clear in His response to them, Matthew

16:18, “...*I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” It is within this context that the church must seek to understand exactly what acceptable worship involves.

Obviously the challenge is a real one, this is not something that can be taken lightly, but God expects us to honor Him in the proper way and to figure out what is acceptable to Him. We are not left without help; the Scriptures give clear and encouraging statements to guide us to the proper position. The church body is called to worship collectively and in order to do that a building is an appropriate place to gather. While all creatures are called to worship God, it is only the called out believers that can actually give worship that is acceptable to God the Father. The unsaved cannot please God, they cannot do anything that is acceptable to the Father until they place their faith and trust in the risen Lord Jesus. When speaking to the Pharisees Jesus said, “...*The will of the Father was to receive the Son, whom He had sent,*” (John 6:40). Since they rejected Jesus anything they offered to the Father in worship would be unacceptable. Things are no different today, if we reject the Lord Jesus there is no worship that is acceptable to the Father. If worship is to be acceptable to God then we must by necessity clearly understand the object of our worship; the Lord Jesus Christ. The practice of worship is not difficult; in fact many of our rituals require no thinking at all, simply constantly repeating the same thing over and over from our subconscious memory. In many cases people simply start repeating what they have repeated many times before, without thinking about what they are saying, or what it means. Vain repetition is not worship, there is no value in unconscious muttering that goes no further than the ceiling. Real worship involves a heartfelt connection to the one being worshiped, knowing Jesus on a personal level is absolutely essential to giving honest worship.

Many people equate ritual with worship, and that is not always true. The use of rituals should point us to God, inform us about God, and create an awareness of His presence. Rituals can be very useful and appropriate in our worship of God, but they can also be used to divert us from real worship to simply going through some motions designed to appease God, not worship Him. Some churches have more elaborate rituals, while others less specific, but even in the lack of specific rituals we can find rituals simply in the order of worship, the songs we sing (praise music, or hymns) and many other things that can in fact become a ritual if we adhere to it over and over. Consider those churches who claim to have no organized order of service, they simply let it flow as the worship leader directs, that is in fact a ritual that they follow.

In Zechariah 7 we find the conversation between the Lord and the people through the prophet Zechariah. They are asking if they should continue to fast and weep as they did in the captivity. The answer from God is very enlightening, God does not approve or disapprove of the activity, what God wants to know is this; did you do this to honor me or yourself? The correctness of their activity is determined by their heart, why they were doing what they were doing. God is concerned with your heart not the ritual. If the heart is right the action is acceptable, if the heart is wrong no ritual will be accepted by God.

A.W. Tozer in his book, *"The Knowledge of the Holy,"* writes, *"The history of mankind will probably show that no people have ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base, as the worshipper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about*

any man is not what he at a given time may say or do but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.”¹

While other people grope in the dark recesses of their minds to try and understand what God is like, Christians have been given a clear written record from God, the Bible. What is now needed is a desire by men to seek to know the God of the Bible and to offer up acceptable worship to Him. John MacArthur makes this statement about knowing God, *“The only way to know God and understand all that is revealed about God is to make the knowledge of God the primary pursuit of your life. If you are consumed with looking for money, if you are devoted to looking for success, if you are involved with looking for anything else more than the knowledge of God, you will not deeply understand His glory.”²*

Understanding God must involve an openness of mind to allow God to speak and to direct according to His written word; not hindered by preconceived ideas of what He wants. It is very easy to attach our own concepts to areas we know nothing or very little about. Human nature seeks to know the unknown. In the process we often attach our own preconceived ideas before we actually discover the facts; creating something that we can feel comfortable with. Worship often falls into this area for many people, simply getting to the place they feel comfortable. Once the comfort level is achieved anything that differs from the accepted pattern becomes noticeable, uncomfortable sometimes and even irritating if the change is major. This fact is often the source of conflict between younger and older worshippers in a given church. The old timers like it the way it has always been, and the younger group wants something more

¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p.9.

² John MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority*, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1983), p. 49.

modern and up to date with their generation. The challenge becomes severe if neither group understands what is taking place. With each group there is the need to be open to other possibilities, looking for that part which in fact leads to worship, encourages worship and leaves the worshiper with a sense of having been in God's presence. When we understand that worship is about honoring God and not pleasing myself, everything takes on a new perspective. Like Zechariah's comments to the nation, are you doing this to honor God or are you doing this to please yourself? It is very easy to fashion our worship in order to please our self. We can see this in Genesis 4:3 where Cain is giving God what he wants and not what is acceptable to the Lord, "*And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.*" Cain did not bring what God had demanded; he simply brought what he wanted to give God. His offering was rejected by God because the Lord had given clear instructions as to what the offering should be. Cain in his pride brought what honored Cain, not what was honoring to the Lord. It is difficult to know what someone's motives are, but here we would have to assume that Cain's motives were wrong, which made everything that followed unacceptable before the Lord. Coming before the lord with a proud spirit is not acceptable behavior, James 4:10, "*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*" When we come before the Lord in worship we must realize our sinful position which will prevent any prideful attitude, Psalms 34:18, "*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite spirit.*" Worship in many respects is the outpouring of our gratitude and love to God for His sacrifice on Calvary for the payment of our sins. If we fail to understand this our worship will be diluted and possibly degenerate into a prideful expression of what we think is important.

The Mystery of Worship

In Genesis 1:1 we read, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*"

There is no attempt to prove the statement; it is given in a very matter-of-fact way. God certainly could have given all the evidence needed to convince men of His mighty acts, but God chose not to. Instead God chose to bring faith into the picture. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as "*...the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" In an attempt to know God, the 'things not seen' spark our imagination. We begin to wonder about those areas that are unknown to us, but not to God. We are overwhelmed with the heavens, fascinated with the sea, and thrilled by the beauty of the creation around us. All of which point to the Creator yet without explaining everything about Him. We see the evidence of God everywhere, the trees, the wildlife, the clouds and the seasons, but these are just the results of our God working among us. God intended for us to wonder, to have a sense of mystery about Him.

Paul wrote in Romans 11:33, "*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*"

There is no possible way for man to fully understand God. Yet, this exactly what God has called us to do, we are to seek after Him. In the process of seeking after God, man has become very good at bringing God down to his own level, making the uncommon common and the spectacular just ordinary. Gilbert Keith Chesterton expressed this problem very clearly, "The world will never starve for want of wonders, but only for want of wonder."³

When we try to eliminate the mystery and wonder that surrounds God, we take away a vital

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship* (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1986), p.43.

ingredient in our attitude of worship. When we try to confine God we limit our ability to worship Him fully. God cannot be limited to any place. Jeremiah 23:24, *“Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?”* T.F. Torrance points out that, *“Worship is the exercise of the mind in the contemplation of God in which wonder and awe play an important part in stretching and enlarging our vision, or in opening up our conceptual forms to take in that which by its nature far outruns them.”*⁴ Wonder, amazement, surprise, astonishment, bewilderment, admiration, awe, and fascination should all be experienced at one time or another during periods of worship. If we are constantly looking for an explanation, we have effectively taken our emotions out of the experience of worship.

Society has been so saturated with the unbelievable made real: i.e., men walking on the moon, that the spiritual realm seems mild in comparison. The space walk could be explained in scientific terms, no more mystery just simple science. *“We are dwellers in the regions of explanation,”* wrote Bishop William Quayle back in 1910.⁵ Today wonder is a rare ingredient in any part of our society and especially in our worship services.

Science saturates the intellect but offers nothing for the emotions and the inner man. Worship properly offered will produce some noticeable changes in the individual involved. James S. Stewart, D.D. states, *“To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God,*

⁴ T. F. Torrance, *God and Rationality*, quoted in *Real Worship* (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1986), p.44.

⁵ Bishop William Quayle, quoted in *Real Worship* (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1986), p.43.

to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.”⁶

If we think that we know all there is to know about God and that there is nothing new to be seen, felt, heard, or experienced, then our worship will be empty and hollow. Too often we are looking for something unusual in our worship service or something different to move us. As a result we see many different attempts by the worship leaders to create this moving experience by programs, music or some other approach. What is needed is to get a vision of God as Isaiah was able to do, *“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple”* (Isaiah 6:1). Isaiah’s response to the vision was total, *“Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; ...for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,”* (Isaiah 6:5).

The wonder has disappeared from the preaching coming from today’s pulpits. For many the message is simply an outline of a text, explanations of controversial subjects, or defense of denominational issues. Warren Wiersbe makes a case for the failure of our pastors to demonstrate the wonder of God. It is hard for a pastor to present to his congregation a sense of wonder and awe about God if he has never been there himself. It is easy to get caught up in the theology and neglect the doxology. If all we are doing is dissecting the written word without stopping to offer praise and worship to God our minds will get overloaded and our hearts starved for a lack of balance. Warren Wiersbe believes that *“We need to move from Theology to Doxology.”* The point is simple; worship is offering praise and honor to God, not just talking about God.

⁶ James S. Stewart, D.D., *Heralds of God* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1946), p. 73.

The apostle Paul was one of the best educated men of his day, but his own statement made his priorities clear. Paul wanted to move from an intellectual knowledge of God to a personal intimate knowledge of Him. Philippians 3:10, *“That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection.”* When we seek to really know the Lord and not just know about Him, we are on our way to understanding real worship. When the preacher seeks to share with his congregation what he has experienced and not what he has learned, the power of God can be unleashed through the spoken word given as a personal testimony. Our worship cannot be simply academic. Wiersbe believes that, *“When preaching is an act of worship and the message is given to God as an offering from the minister’s heart, then God can take the message and bless it.”*⁷

⁷ Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, p. 46.

The Meaning of Worship

Most people would have a very difficult time explaining the meaning of worship. Yet the definitions probably would all have some very similar ingredients. There would be worship on Sunday, singing songs, and listening to a message from the pastor. While there are many different ideas about the day of worship, the songs sung, and the message, these three topics would probably be the extent of things associated with worship.

People in our society have separated worship and the rest of their activities; when they are not in church everything they do are secular, when in church it is spiritual. Somehow we have accepted the idea that it does not matter what we do during the week as long as we attend church on the appropriate day. It is this attitude that has lead to the present day rebellion of many young people toward the traditional church service; they see people one way on Sunday and very differently on Monday. The conclusion is simple: obviously their worship on Sunday has no impact on their life, their thinking or their actions. As a result young people are starving for reality, something that brings the everyday living and the spiritual into harmony.

First Corinthians makes our responsibility very clear, *“Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God”* (10:31). To honestly worship God on Sunday, we must live a life of worship during the week. It is a mistake to think we can live a life of selfishness and carnality and still worship God. Real worship will naturally flow out of a life committed to serving and honoring God. Real worship then is a spontaneous outpouring

of a heart satisfied with the relationship God has made possible through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Worship can be defined as honor and adoration directed to God. The New Testament uses several words for worship, but there are two that are very helpful in understanding the meaning of worship. The first Greek word is “*proskuneo*,” which means to make obeisance, to do reverence “*pros*,” meaning towards, and “*kuneo*,” meaning to kiss); it is the most frequent word rendered “to worship.”⁸ The second word is “*latreuo*,” to serve, to render religious service or homage, is also translated “to worship.”⁹ Worship then is something we give to God; it is not receiving something in return. Many people have the idea that they should go to church to get something from the worship service. God does many things for us and He gives us many different things, but not in worship. Worship is the time for us to give to God what is rightfully His; praise, honor and glory. The selfless desire to give to God is the essence and the heart of worship. It begins first with the giving of ourselves; Romans 12:1, “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*” Next in line is our attitude, Phillipines 2:3, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in the lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.*” Next is the giving of our possessions, Second Corinthians 9:7, “*Every man according as he purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver.*” The action of giving is a natural response for the one who has been sensitive to the prompting of God in his life.

⁸ W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1984), p. 1247.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1248.

A.W. Tozer has said, *“We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit.”*¹⁰

Life can be very difficult at times and it is during times of severe testing that many people offer themselves to God in hopes of escaping the problem or sickness they are facing. They pray and often make a very firm promise to God if He will grant their request. However, that is not what worship is designed to do. Warren Wiersbe describes the relationship of suffering and worship; *“The purpose of worship is that we might glorify God by enlisting our suffering and using it creatively. A crisis does not make a man; it shows what a man is made of.”*¹¹

While there is a time for corporate worship, it still must be motivated by a personal response to God. Following a liturgy will not produce true worship if the heart of the one worshipping has not been moved by a heart overwhelmed by the presence of God. Worshipping in order to receive from God is not worship, it is petition. Worshipping in order to feel good is simply entertainment. Acceptable worship is very simple; *“It is not something done to us or for us, but by us,”* Robert E. Webber.¹²

Seeking to find out as much as possible about God in order to have our own curiosity satisfied will make the process very formal, cold, and impersonal. We cannot approach God in worship flippantly or as a mechanical reaction. Acceptable worship demands an awareness of the person of God with a corresponding understanding of my unworthiness. The focus must constantly be upon who God is, what He is, and what He requires from those

¹⁰ A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1950), p. 11.

¹¹ John MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), p. 86.

¹² Robert E. Webber, *Worship Is a Verb*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1985), p.12.

who would seek to honor and serve Him. John MacArthur wrote, *“We cannot worship God acceptably except with reverence and godly fear, and in the beauty of holiness. We must return to the biblical teaching of God’s utter and awesome holiness in order to be filled with the gratitude and humility that characterize true worship.”*¹³ If we fail to understand that God is not one of us and attribute to Him a willingness to accept a casual approach to worship, we will never have real worship in any meaningful form.

¹³ John MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), p. 86.

The Method of Worship

Our zeal to be biblical in worship has divided many churches. The interpretation of Scripture has led to many different applications and approaches. One group may depend largely on ritual while another may totally reject anything closely associated with ritual. Some people would stress music and the use of instruments, while others almost consider the use of instruments to be blasphemy. Our God is multi-dimensional, but our worship is often one dimensional in practice. Martin Luther is reported to have said that God gave us five senses with which to worship Him and that it would be sheer ingratitude for us to use less.¹⁴

Since all scripture is given by God (2 Timothy 3:16), that would be a good place to look for instructions concerning what is acceptable to the Lord. Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, *“Walk prudently when you go to the house of God and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven and you on earth; therefore let your words be few.”* It is apparent that a person should carefully consider how he will approach God. We should not stumble into His presence but carefully and reverently approach the King. Being on time would seem to be important; if we were approaching an earthly King being late would be a clear lack of respect. It is this lack of concern about our attitude and corresponding behavior that reflects deeply on the level of worship being offered to the Lord. The Lord cannot be pleased when we fail to offer Him the respect due to Him.

¹⁴ A.W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous*, (Harrisburg, PA.: Christian Publications, 1955), p.55.

Once we are in the place of worship our first action should be to offer songs of praise and thanksgiving: Psalm 95:12, *“O come let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.”* The Lord delights in our songs of praise and thanksgiving; these are methods of showing that we appreciate God goodness and protection. Music has a special way of preparing our hearts for entrance into the realm of worship.

Warren Wiersbe believes that, “Music is important to God’s people. It is one of our best ways of expressing praise to God, and it is an effective means of education and evangelism. We witness to God, the church, and the lost world whenever we sing. Music confronts the whole person-heart, mind, and will, and demands some kind of response.”¹⁵

If we are to worship God with all five senses, then certainly music must be included. Scripture gives a very clear picture of music as being involved in major events and activities of God. *“The world was born to the sound of music,”* wrote Richard Bodey. *“At its creation, the morning starts sang together, and all of the sons of God shouted for joy”* (Job 38:7). On the night the Savior of the world was born, thunderous doxology was sung by angel choirs, *“Glory to God in the highest...”* (Luke 2:14). Throughout Scripture music is present and is a key part of the activities of God.

Music is important to any worship service, but any music without proper direction and purpose cannot be pleasing to the Lord. The goal of music is to bring praises to God and accent His glory. Music simply for music sake will not accomplish the goal of directing people to the Savior. Much of the music we hear today is simply the result of personal choice, not

¹⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, p. 136.

careful evaluation of the content based on need, results or purpose. *“Taste by itself no matter how refined it is, is useless,”* writes Harold M. Best. *“If God senses faith at work, faith which makes us free of conditioned reflexes he smiles, whatever the supposed level of achievement at the time.”*¹⁶

We must always remember that our worship is not an end in itself but a means to an end; that is, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, simple form without conviction is useless. A song sung to God without meaning borders on blasphemy. God does not want what we casually throw His way; He wants our best, particularly when it involves worship. The music offered to God must first be considered very carefully before being presented to God in our worship gatherings.

Evaluating music for worship should involve at least seven different areas of consideration. At the top of the list is biblical content. If there is no biblical message, we are neither singing about God nor to God. If the song ignores or contradicts Scripture, we are insulting the very one we seek to honor. If we ignore Scripture in the song we infer it is not important. If we contradict Scripture in our song we are calling God a liar. *“A singer has no more right to sing a lie than a preacher has to preach a lie. Let our singing be theologically sound as well as technically adequate. No amount of beautiful harmony can atone for theological heresy,”* Warren Wiersbe.¹⁷

Music must present a biblical view of life and it must be clear enough to be understood. Psalm 47:7 states, *“For God is King of all the earth; sing your praises with understanding.”*

¹⁶ Harold Best, *Christian Responsibility in Music*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 407.

¹⁷ Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, p. 117.

First Corinthians 14:15, *"...I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with understanding."*

I believe that God is honored by our technical excellence. When Solomon finished the work on the temple, he brought in skilled musicians who devoted all their efforts to preparing for the service in the temple by means of their music. First Corinthians 25:7, *"So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the lord, even all that were 'cunning,' was two hundred fourscore and eight."* The word translated 'cunning' is the Hebrew word 'bin' which means to be intelligent, to give understanding. It is clear that special care was given to the music and those who participated in presenting the music.

The reason we sing must be considered very carefully. Are we in fact singing out of a heart filled with praise and thanksgiving to God, or are we as guilty as the Pharisees whom Christ condemned because of their faulty motives. In Matthew 23:5 we read, *"But all their works they do for to be seen of men."* This is a delicate area of consideration and it is easy to be critical of others and their motives. The question we need to ask ourselves is this, are we singing to the glory of God or to receive praise of men? Often we get caught up with the ability of someone performing and lose our focus on the Lord.

Balance is the key word in the Christian life and it is no different with our music. Like every other aspect of our lives, we can allow our music to dominate and control us. It is so easy to focus upon music to the point that we eliminate other vital aspects of worship. Music can become the point and purpose of our gathering, rather than the instrument to help us worship and honor the lord. If music becomes the dominant factor in our worship

service to the exclusion of the rest of the ingredients of worship we will fail to achieve a full and complete offering to God. Music should never create an environment where the listener is limited in their approach to honor God. On the contrary music should expand our vision, heighten our senses and thrill our heart by preparing us for a total relationship with God through every avenue available.

Listening to music, as well as participating, unlocks the barriers of resistance from a sinful nature and forces that would lead us away from God. Music allows us to feel with our hearts what our minds tell us is true. Music paints a verbal picture of the message being sung. If we allow our emotions to control our music, it will produce music designed only to gratify the individual with little or no consideration as to its reception by the very one we seek to worship. Music is the beginning place for worship; Psalm 100:4, *“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name.”* Our praise and thanks help prepare us for additional acts of worship.

There cannot be a worship service apart from the reading of the written word. Moses instructed the nation of Israel concerning worship in Deuteronomy 31:11, *“When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, then shalt thou read this law before all Israel in their hearing.”* Joshua was commanded by God to give the scriptures a prominent place in his daily life; Joshua 1:8, *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.”*

The importance of Scripture reading can be seen in the life of the Lord Jesus. As a child, Jesus would read the Scriptures in the synagogue and then as an adult he continued the

practice of reading; Luke 4:16, *“And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up; and as his custom was, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.”* Scripture reading is essential to worship. It is the Scriptures which define acceptable worship and provide the guidelines and boundaries which are from God. We can only understand God to the extent that He has revealed Himself to us in the written word. To ignore Scripture is to ignore the very one we seek to honor through our worship. If we are to respect God we must respect His written word. The Scriptures give direction and understanding. The written word provides a safeguard against error and false worship. The Psalmist expressed this truth in Psalm 119:104-105, *“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”* If we follow any other source of information we will stumble in the darkness of another gospel, which is no gospel at all.

The reading of the word is very often followed by an explanation of what was read. Jesus after reading Isaiah in Luke 4:16, sat down and then in verse twenty-one we read that He began to explain the passage. Preaching is a very real act of worship as long as Christ is being honored and praised. Often preaching is seen as something to be endured by the congregation and not as a vital ingredient in our total worship experience. Preaching must be an act of worship if the message is to help people and glorify God. Frank Cairns spoke these words during his 1934 Warrack lectures:

“Gentlemen, if you are ever to serve God by your preaching, you have to make up your mind as to whether it has or has not the right to be regarded as an essential part of the worship of God; you must have a clear idea as to whether your preaching is for you an act

of worship—an offering to God which you can make with a clear conscience, and a wholehearted devotion, and a humble faith, or whether it is something which—be it either cheap or tawdry, or manifesting both erudition and literary skill—could not be regarded as possessing the authority of the Word of God or any divine sanction whatsoever, and which might as well be tied in a napkin and buried in the earth for all the value it has for the purpose of bringing the human soul face to face with God.”¹⁸

Preaching is never to show the talent of an individual or to produce praise from the congregation onto the preacher. Preaching should first and foremost help people see Jesus. “The fact is that the sermon is divinely intended to be one of those high places of the spirit where men and women grow piercingly aware of the eternal, and where a worshipping congregation—forgetting all about the preacher—sees ‘no man, save Jesus only,’ according to James Stewart.¹⁹ It is easy to see the pulpit as belonging to the one who stands behind it, but that can be a very dangerous concept. If, in fact, the minister sees the pulpit as his personal possession, then there is very little limitation as to what the pulpit can be used for. “The pulpit,” wrote Bernard Manning, “...is no more the ministers than the communion table is his. It will make us resolute to eliminate from our preaching everything that is cheap and showy and meretricious.”²⁰ It is so easy to become fascinated with a good preacher and go away praising the man rather than the creator. The congregation must guard against responding only to the way the preacher delivers his message and ignoring the content of the message. Do we see the man or do we hear the message; do we see the man or do we

¹⁸ Frank Cairns, *The Prophet of the Heart*, (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1934), p. 56-57.

¹⁹ James Stewart, *Heralds of God*, p. 72.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

see the Lord? “No man,” says James Denney, “*can give the impression that he himself is clever and that Jesus Christ is mighty to save.*”²¹

There is something very special about preaching. On the one hand it seems foolish, but on the other hand it has been proven to be a powerful tool in the changing of people’s lives as well as entire nations. John and Charles Wesley have been credited with saving the nation of England from the type of blood bath that took place during the French Revolution, by their preaching and music. First Corinthians 1:21, “*...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*” Martin Luther considered preaching as a means of offering back to God something very special; “When I declare the Word of God I offer sacrifice.”²² R.J. Coates and J.I. Packer both felt that preaching was very special, somehow beyond the human ability to understand the cause and effect apart from the power of God in the process. They wrote, “*Preaching, if not sacramental, is profane. By this, we mean that a true sermon is an act of God; and not merely a performance by man. In real preaching the speaker is the servant of the word and God speaks and works by the word through his servant’s lips.*”²³

Acceptable preaching cannot be separated from the written word of God. We cannot worship God without the knowledge of His written word, or without the preaching of it. “Word and worship belong indissolubly to each other. All worship is an intelligent and loving response to the revelation of God, because it is the adoration of his name. The conclusion seems very obvious, acceptable worship is impossible without preaching.

²¹ Ibid., p. 74.

²² Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, p. 121.

²³ J.I. Packer, *Beyond the Battle for the Bible*, (West Chester, IL: Crossway Books, 1980), p. 84.

When preaching is on track we will find that it makes known the knowledge of God to the hearers and presents the praising of His name for who He is. Far from being an alien intrusion into worship, the reading and preaching of the word are actually indispensable to it; the two must be included and should never be separated. A large part of the problem with today's attempt to worship is the fact that many have tried to have one without the other. In many churches you will find an attempt at giving some acknowledgment to the Scriptures, but fail to deliver any message or explanation centered on the word of God. The message part simply goes off in another direction based on the current trends, news or problems of the day. John Stott addresses this issue, *"Indeed, it is their unnatural divorce which accounts for the low level of so much contemporary worship. Our worship is poor because our knowledge of God is poor, and our knowledge of God is poor because our preaching is poor. But when the Word of God is expounded in its fullness, and the congregation begins to glimpse the glory of the living God, they bow down in solemn awe and joyful wonder before His throne. It is preaching which accomplishes this, the proclamation of the Word of God in the power of the Spirit of God. That is why preaching is unique and irreplaceable."*²⁴

All of worship should be designed to please God, which according to Hebrews 11:6, *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* If faith is the first requirement to come before God then the means to faith must be central to our approach. Romans 10:17 says, *"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God."* It is clear that preaching the word of God must absolutely be a part of any worship service.

²⁴ John R. Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, (Grand Rapids, Erdmans, 1982), p. 82, 83.

Different aspects of worship involve different senses; singing sparks the emotions and preaching challenges the mind, but there is more involved when worship is complete. Not only should we involve our emotions and our minds, but we need to understand that if we approach worship with a wrong or bad attitude, all the music in the world will not overcome it and the best preaching will simply be disregarded. Attitude is the filter that we see everything through. It is our attitude that either frees us to receive the benefits of good music and preaching or reject both with very little impact. If I approach the worship service with a critical attitude I will simply be judgmental, if I come with anger in my heart, I will block my spirit from offering praise to God. I cannot at the same time be angry with my brother and offer praise and worship to the Lord, Matt 18:15, *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”* Matt 5:24, *“Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”*

“Worship involves attitudes (awe, reverence, and respect) and actions (bowing, praising, and serving), true worship is balanced and involves the mind, the emotions and the will.”²⁵

Rituals can and do play a vital role in developing our attitude toward the worship service; either by its presence or lack of it.

The role of ritual largely determines how we sing, how we act, how we listen and of course how we preach. The order of the service will produce either a sense of focus or casualness that certainly impacts the overall attitude of the congregation. If there is a casual approach from the pulpit the people will feel a freedom to talk, get up and move around,

²⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, p. 21.

read the bulletin and generally give half hearted attention until they come to the part of the service they are interested in. This attitude is a reversal of what needs to be communicated, they are not there to relax and be entertained, they are there to give praise and worship to the God of Glory. With a casual approach we minimize the importance of why we are there, with a casual approach there will be a casual response in our worship and honor back to the Lord.

For many, ritual is a bad word that they equate with deadness and meaningless repetition. However, ritual when coupled with truth, sincerity, and faith can be a powerful tool to help bring people face to face with the God of Glory. Rituals have always been used to point worshipers to a specific truth about God, but when God is left out and the ritual is only a form or practice it then becomes cold and dead. When we transfer our attention from the one the ritual is designed to lift up and simply focus on the ritual itself the purpose for the ritual is destroyed and the action meaningless. For instance, we see many churches lighting candles before or during a service, it is easy to look at the candles and think how comforting it is to watch them and never understand that the candles are to point us to a biblical truth that all believers are called the “light of the world,” Matt 5:15-16, *“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. **16** Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* The candles are lit to remind us that we are the light of the world. A very powerful reminder of what every believer should be doing when they leave the worship service and go out into the world.

Oswald Chambers said, *“There is a use for ritual in a man’s religious life. When a man is in a right relationship to God ritual is an assistance; the place of worship and the atmosphere are both conducive to worship.”*²⁶

Francis Schaffer liked to refer to ritual as the style of worship. Whether we like to admit it or not, all of us adhere to some form of ritual or style; whether it is a service marked by a lack of order and preparation or one that follows a strict form, it is all a type of ritual. Schaffer went on to say, *“There is no such thing as a godly style or an ungodly style. The more one tries to make such a distinction, the more confusing it becomes.”*²⁷

People are truly fashioned by the practices they grew up with, and the longer we practice a particular pattern the harder it is to change that practice. We set our feet in wet theological concrete when we are young physically or spiritually and when we are old we cannot move. We become victims of our own past, defending to the end the practices that we have set our feet in, and now cannot move because the concrete has hardened around us, unbending and inflexible we simply stand in place. Then we try to convince ourselves that a real virtue is at stake and we must defend it against everyone who would seek to change it.

Warren Wiersbe has recognized this pattern and points out that each of us has his or her preferences, and it is easy to make these preferences the law of the Medes and the Persians that cannot be altered. When we do this we end up with a hopelessly complicated problem that does more to divide the congregation than assist in worshipping God.

²⁶ Oswald Chambers, *Shade of His Hand*. (Fort Washington, PA.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1973), p. 52.

²⁷ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*. (Downers Grove, IL.: Inter Varsity Press, 1973), p. 51.

There has always been heated debate over the form or style of worship. One church will recite the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13; while another church will claim to do that is vain repetition of prayer. The issue is not what others may or may not think is appropriate, the question must always be, what does God want from us? David wrote in Psalms 19:14, *"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."*

A worship service should give attention to all the aspects of worship, which includes allowing the congregation the opportunity for expression and involvement. Reciting the Lord's Prayer may do very little for a person who is not a redeemed child of the King, but to those who know Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, it can be a very powerful and meaningful expression of their relationship and responsibility to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. W. Tozer was not accustomed to a rigid order of service, but even he recognized the benefits that certain rituals could achieve as a means to an end (worship) and not be a distraction. He wrote, *"We of the non liturgical churches tend to look with some disdain upon those churches that follow a carefully prescribed form of service, and certainly there must be a good deal in such services that has little or no meaning for the average participant—this is not because it is carefully prescribed but because the average participant is what he is. But I have observed that our familiar impromptu service, planned by the leader twenty minutes before often tends to follow a ragged and tired order. The liturgical service is at least beautiful; ours is often ugly."*²⁸

²⁸ A.W. Tozer, *God Tells the Man Who Cares*, (Harrisburg, PA.: Christian Publications, 1970), p. 11.

The form or ritual that a church follows, whether structured or non-structured, sets the mood for the entire worship service. If we pay little attention or no attention to the order of worship, the ingredients of worship or even the surroundings in the place of worship, then we are limiting our ability to totally respond to God through our emotions, intellect, and will. We then become one dimensional in our worship and God becomes limited in our thinking. We are not to go to the one extreme of worshipping forms (idols) without substance, nor should we go to the other extreme of eliminating everything but the bare essentials. It is the taking of Deuteronomy 5:8, *“You shall not make you any graven image....you shall not bow down thyself to them,”* to the extreme that has tended to eliminate most art forms from our churches. Who can deny the impact of entering a church and seeing the lights low and the candles burning softly as the choir sings “Silent Night” with the congregation reverently attentive to the message of our Lord’s birth. The setting for worship is very critical to the congregation’s attitude in worship. Any tool that will help us see the Lord and be accepted by Him should be considered; regardless of the personal prejudices or preferences.

All the arts can make a contribution to Christian worship. Frank C. Senn wrote, *“But this is not the same as saying that liturgy is an art form.”*²⁹ Anything taken to an extreme can be a hindrance to our worship. Warren Wiersbe warns us of the danger of an improper balance when it comes to the arts in worship, *“The arts can help us to express our worship, but we must take care not to worship the arts.”*³⁰ John Calvin also saw the benefits of the arts in worship. He wrote, *“Because sculpture and painting are gifts of God, I seek a pure and legitimate use of each, lest those things which the Lord has conferred upon us for his glory*

²⁹ Quoted in Warren Wiersbe’s, *Real Worship*, p. 142.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

and our good be not only polluted by perverse misuse, but also turned to our destruction.”³¹

Perhaps John Calvin was concerned like Warren Wiersbe about our tendency to worship the arts, rather than using the arts to more fully express our worship of God. The answer to this is simple, anything that points us to the Lord in praise and adoration should be considered and anything that prevents that should be discarded, no matter how beautiful or exciting it may be personally.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131

Enemies of Worship

There exist many different forces that would hinder or restrict the worship of God. It would seem logical to assume that the more acceptable our worship the easier our life should be due to God blessing our actions, but in reality it may be just the opposite. The apostle Paul gives a clear warning concerning the dangers facing anyone who attempts to worship God with their whole heart. In Ephesians 6:11 we read, *“Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”* Paul is describing the forces opposing God and everything that honors Him, including our worship.

In Daniel 10:12-13, we have an example of the battle Paul was referring to. Daniel was seeking help from God through his prayers; Daniel 10:2, *“In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.”* Daniel had offered up his prayers to the Lord, but for three weeks there was no answer to his prayers, which he clearly expected to receive. For Daniel the time must have felt like an eternity, and not knowing what was going on had to be very stressful. Then in verse 12 an angel speaks to Daniel and gives him an explanation of what was happening, *“Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, your words were heard and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.”* Daniel had no idea of the battle raging around

him, it was not visible to his eyes, and all he knew were his prayers had not been answered. Now he is given an explanation, his submission to God sparked a response from the demonic forces. Satan's forces will do everything they can to interfere with anyone seeking to honor God and live for Him. Since worship is what Satan desires any worship directed to God brings immediate interference intended to prevent God from receiving what is due to Him.

The spiritual warfare began when Satan, formerly called Lucifer, Son of the Morning, decided that he would ascend into heaven, exalt his throne above the stars of God; he would sit upon the mount of the congregation and be like the most High (Isaiah 14:12-14). That was the first recorded opposition to God's power and position. Immediately Lucifer was cast out of God's presence and was no longer called Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, but Satan which means adversary. Satan has been the adversary of God and his people ever since that fateful day.

Scripture describes Satan as having a consuming passion to be worshipped and served. In Isaiah 14:14 we read, *"I will be like the most High,"* that was the attitude that sparked Satan's rebellion and has driven him ever since to imitate God and everything God does. In Matthew 4 we have the account of Jesus in the wilderness being tempted by Satan. The one central concern of Satan was to get Jesus to worship him. Matthew 4:9, *"...All these things will I give thee, if thou will fall down and worship me."* In Revelation 13:4 we have another account of Satan, there described as a dragon, and in this passage he is receiving worship, *"And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast,"* the dragon is another name used for Satan, just one among many.

The Scriptures state that when Satan was cast out of heaven he took a large number of angelic beings with him (Revelation 12:4). As a result of this rebellion God has created a place of judgment for all those angels who followed Satan, and for Satan himself. Even though Satan and his forces will end up in the Lake of Fire for eternity, they are still free to wander the face of the earth creating havoc and resisting the children of God whenever possible. Satan uses a variety of tricks to disrupt God's children in their attempt to worship one true living God. Satan's activities include a vast variety of forces used to resist and oppose God's program. Satan is a master deceiver, and as such he is able to convince many to believe his lies about God. Revelation 12:9 states, *"...He is the deceiver of the whole world."* He convinces some people that he, Satan, does not exist, that he is something different from what the Bible declares him to be. For others he convinces them that he is actually in combat with God and is equal in power to Him, this creates the illusion that the future is yet undecided. Satan used his lies to trick Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:1-7). He has the ability to bring on some physical illness and can actually destroy physical property as he did with Job (Luke 13:16; Job 1:11-12). Satan deceives people into thinking that he can do whatever he wants, actually he is limited by God and he only exists because God allows it. In Matthew 13:19 we read, *When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, and catches away that which was sown."* Satan opposes the preaching of the Word of God in a very active way, by blinding the minds of the unsaved (II Corinthians 4:4). Counterfeiting is another method that Satan loves to use, he will fashion his lies to be very similar to God's truth, but with just enough error to make it useless, it becomes another gospel that is no gospel at all. Satan loves to go to church; he is a faithful

church attender. In fact he does everything possible to get his people to lead the church in the wrong direction. His ministers divide and destroy all in the name of the Lord, II Corinthians 11:13-14, *“For such are false apostles deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”*

Peter gives us a very clear warning about the dangers associated with Satan’s attacks on God’s people, *“Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour,”* (I Peter 5:8).

In the same manner the angel sent to Daniel was hindered (Daniel 10:12), so Paul was hindered when he attempted to visit the Thessalonians, *“Wherefore we would have come to you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us,”* (I Thessalonians 2:18). There is no question as to Satan’s intentions; he will do whatever he can to stop, hinder, or destroy anyone who seeks to honor and worship the Creator rather than the one created.

Warren Wiersbe made this statement, *“The Christian life is more than joyful fellowship or quiet meditation. It is a battle that we cannot escape and that we dare not lose; and the key to our victory is worship.”*³²

Acceptable worship is exactly what Satan does not want and will do everything in his power to prevent. People can worship anything and everything and Satan is pleased as long as they do not direct their worship to the Lord. Whenever we acceptably worship the Lord, we are inviting the wrath of Satan: he will stop at nothing to prevent it. *“The heart of the*

³² Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, p. 154.

matter, of course, is the spiritual conflict that we must engage in because we worship the true and living God. Satan does not care what the church does so long as it does not worship. Once the church really begins to worship, then Satan's territory is under attack and he is in danger of losing some of his spoils. This is an obvious truth, and yet few Christians seem to know it (Warren Wiersbe).³³

Satan has been in the business of deceiving people ever since his appearance in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. One of his best tricks is to convince people that worship is not really important to God. Satan does not want us to attend services where Christ is honored and the word of God is clearly presented. It seems that more and more people are staying away from the traditional church service. The evidence points to the fact that when the word of God is not believed and preached with authority, the reason for attending church has been destroyed. If you want good music you can find that anywhere, but good preaching is something special. If Satan can convince pastors to preach on anything but the Scriptures he has effectively removed the motivation for people to attend church. What is left is a shell with no body, a form but no function, and the conclusion is often that the church is no longer relative to our being. If pastors will preach the word with authority and possess a personal conviction as to the effectiveness of doing so, the Spirit of God will do the rest. Why should a person even consider going to church if they are never confronted with any challenge, any conviction, and any motivation and leave wondering why they took the time to go in the first place.

³³ Ibid., p. 156.

Hebrews 10:25 is a clear command to come together in corporate worship, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.”* Once the assembly of believers is in one place it is then the responsibility of the pastor to make sure that they understand why they are there and feed them enough to create a hungering for more. When a person leaves the worship service they should have a sense that they were in the presence of the Lord and know that it was good for them to be there. When worship is done correctly it is uplifting to the worshiper, honoring to God and a major defeat for Satan. Ignatius of Antioch in his *“Epistle to the Ephesians,”* wrote, *“take heed there, often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. For when you come frequently together in the same place the powers of Satan are destroyed, and his fiery darts urging to sin, fall back ineffectual. For your concord and harmonious faith prove his destruction, and the torment of his assistants.”*³⁴

We are at war and most people never see the enemy nor realize his destructive power. If a church is doing what is proper; worshiping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23), the battle will rage on and we will see the results in our personal lives and in the church as a whole. True worship is and always has been a spiritual conflict that will not cease as long as we are on this earth. It is interesting to note that the nation of Israel, God’s chosen people, were often referred to as the army of God (Exodus 12:51). Everywhere the nation of Israel went they had to deal with opposition and very often had to physically fight. No nation in history had to deal with the intense opposition of so many other nations. Yet with all the opposition

³⁴ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1 (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, reprint 1979), p.55.

the nation of Israel still exist today, other nations have come and gone, but the Jewish people have maintained their identity through it all. The only reasonable explanation is the spiritual warfare that is going on between the forces of Satan and God's children.

When the opposition came the tribes were all set in a special order with the ark of God leading the way. We read in Numbers 10:35, *"...Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee."* Warren Wiersbe properly observes that, *"Israel was a worshipping army, fighting the battles of the Lord. The success of their warfare depended on the success of their worship. If they were right with God they had no difficulty defeating their enemies. If they were not pleasing to God, they were shamefully defeated."*³⁵ The spiritual battles are won or lost based upon the strength of our worship. The physical battles reflect the outcome of the spiritual struggles. Joshua experienced this truth at the battle of Ai. Prior to the battle, Achan, the son of Carmi, took something that the Lord had said earlier should not be taken (Joshua 6:18). When the battle began, the whole nation was defeated because of one man's sin. Joshua 7:1, *"...and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel."* In Joshua 7:5 we read that the men of Ai defeated the men of Israel and killed thirty-six men. Joshua, not knowing why they were defeated, asked the Lord what happened. He was told, *"Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff."* Because of a spiritual rebellion they suffered a physical defeat, *"Therefore*

³⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, p. 68.

the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies,” (Joshua 7:12).

The spiritual wickedness we face is very real. Satan is fighting constantly and we never see the battle that is raging all around us. The results can be felt in our daily lives, but often we do not realize the source of our trouble. Achan is a good example of the result of a spiritual battle; God said he should not touch the accursed thing, but the pull, the attraction was so great that Achan took it. The material things around us can become a powerful weapon of Satan to get us to disobey the commands of God, effectively ruining our worship. The problem was not limited to Joshua’s day; it has always been with us. Even our Lord addressed this problem of materialism in Luke 18:8 where a rich young ruler had come to Him and asked, *“...what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Jesus answered and said, *“Thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bare false witness, honor you father and your mother,”* (Luke 18:20). The young man then answered, *“All these have I kept from my youth up”* (Luke 18:21). Jesus then pointed to the real issue in this young man’s life, his material possessions. When Jesus told him to sell everything and give it to the poor, with very little hesitation the rich man turned and walked away, he was not willing to give up his material possessions for spiritual treasures. The hold that possessions have is powerful and not easily overcome. Matthew 19:24 states, *“...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”*

There are many things which God has given to us for our benefit. The very creation around us is a gift from God for us to enjoy, but it is also there to point us to Him. The

creation is evidence of God's power and majesty. But even something as good as the physical world around us can be a means of diverting us from God. In Romans 1:17-32 we discover what happens when the creation is not seen as God intended. There we see men worshipping the creation rather than the creator. As a result the truth of God is turned into a lie and men fail to honor the Lord and worship Him. Satan is very good at taking something as good as God's creation and making it a stumbling block for those who fail to realize the source of everything we see. In Psalms 104:31 we read, *"The glory of the Lord shall endure forever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works."* God rejoices over the creation, but it must grieve Him to see His creation used by Satan to actually turn people away from worship and glorifying Him.

The apostle Paul makes a comment in Romans 14:14 that addresses this problem of seeing things in a proper relationship to God, *"I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteems anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."* What Paul seems to be stressing is our personal responsibility to handle things correctly. Warren Wiersbe makes this observation, *"Whatever we try to use for God that has in some way been divorced from God can only become a barrier between us and God."*³⁶ The local church can actually fall into this category. When a local church no longer points people to the Lord Jesus Christ and settles for predictable ritualism, the church can become a hindrance to people seeking the Lord. In Matthew 15:14 Jesus speaking about the Pharisees said, *"Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind..."* The Pharisees were the religious leaders of Christ's day, yet they failed to lead people to God. Actually the religious system as

³⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

practiced in Christ's day was a complete detour from what God wanted and required. Rather than put their trust in God the Jewish people put their trust in the system they had developed over many years.

Today the same problem exists; we have blind leaders leading blind people in a search for God. A.W. Tozer observed, *"In the average church service, the most real thing is the shadowy unreality of everything. The worshipper sits in a state of suspended mentation; a kind of dreamy numbness creeps upon him; he hears words but they do not register, he cannot relate them to anything on his own life-level."*³⁷

When people look at the church they often think of God as being in the church building. When they leave the church building they react as though they have left God there. This failure to see God as being omnipresent has been a major problem for many people. John MacArthur makes this comment about confining God to a place, *"People have always tried to confine God. Many Old Testament Jews felt that God actually dwelt in the tabernacle. They did not understand that it was only the symbol of His presence and he did not dwell there in His fullness."*³⁸ God is not limited to any place Jeremiah 23:23-24, *"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?"* By limiting God to a single place we limit our worship. MacArthur makes a strong point when he said, *"We do not go somewhere to worship because God is there. That is a totally heathen notion."*³⁹

If we understand God to be in a church building, then we can come and go from His presence as we please. This attitude takes away a strong moderating force in our lives. If we

³⁷ A.W. Tozer, *The Divine Conquest*, (Harrisburg, PA.: Christian Publications, 1950), p. 11.

³⁸ John Mac Arthur, *The Ultimate Priority*, p. 60.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

think we are not in God's presence there is a strong tendency to do what we want and not what is pleasing to God. Colossians 3:23 says, *"Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord..."* Giving worship to God is a full time responsibility. If we cannot sense His presence, our worship will be less than acceptable because it will be limited to the times we come into His presence in the church building.

The spiritual realm can affect our worship. The physical things around us can also impact our worship, by changing it, dictating it, and generally shaping it based on where we are and what we are doing. And there is a third force that can control my worship and that is our attitude. My attitude toward God will have a great impact upon my worship. If I am going to really worship God I must be able to see and affirm the holiness of God. Without a clear proclamation of the holiness of God I cannot give Him true worship and adoration. The way some people look at God is the reason they have a weak or non-existent praise for God in their worship service. When people see God as having certain attributes, like holiness they are failing to understand that God does not possess or take on certain characteristics, but that is what He is. God does not possess some holiness, He is holy. John Mac Arthur points out that God does not conform to some standard, He is the standard.

People do not stand when a poor beggar comes into their presence, but let the President of the United States come in and everyone will stand. The President has power and prestige and everyone recognizes that fact. We will not understand worship until we understand our own sinfulness and God's total holiness. *"When we see God as holy, our instant and only reaction is to see ourselves as unholy. Until a man understands the holiness of God he can*

*never know the depth of his own sin.*⁴⁰ Refusing to acknowledge our own sin is a major obstacle to offering true worship back to God. Isaiah understood what it was like to get a look at God's holiness; instantly he realized his total sinfulness, *"Woe is me for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts,"* (Isaiah 6:5). John Mac Arthur captured the essence of what had taken place, *"Isaiah had seen a vision of God in His holiness, and he was absolutely shattered to the very core of his being by a sense of his own sinfulness."*⁴¹

We like to focus on ourselves, not God. When we constantly look at ourselves we lose sight of the Holy standard of God and start comparing ourselves with other people rather than God. The apostle Paul wrote, *"They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise,"* (II Corinthians 10:12). Keeping our eyes on God and His holiness is essential if our worship will be accepted by Him. John MacArthur warns, *"Worship is not giddy. It does not rush into God's presence unprepared and insensitive to His majesty. It is not shallow, superficial, or flippant."*⁴²

There must be serious preparation before any worship can take place. It is the preparation of the heart and the putting away of the sins that so easily embrace us that must take place first. Sin is the issue; it has separated man from God, beginning with Adam and continuing to the present. When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he violated the commandment of God and immediately experienced a break in his relationship with the Lord. The Lord responded to Adam's disobedience by separating Himself from them and by

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.78.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 78.

⁴² Ibid., p.79.

putting Adam and his wife out of the garden (Genesis 3:24). God also cursed the human race which resulted in physical death.

Sin always separates man from God and no amount of human effort can restore the relationship. God had to make the first step to restore sinful fallen man. The plan God decided on is really hard to comprehend, it goes beyond the limits of human understanding. Yet, God in His wisdom understood exactly what was needed to restore fallen man and still satisfy His holiness and righteous character. God sent his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to earth while man was still in a position of enmity. Earlier God gave His law to Moses and the nation of Israel and try as they did no one was able to keep the whole law. God was using the law to show man that he needed help, he could not deal with his sin, the debt was too great. The law of God demanded the shedding of blood for the payment of sin, but not just any blood. The blood sacrifices of bulls and goats could not take away mans' sin. The payment had to be a perfect sinless sacrifice; the only one who could qualify for this standard was God Himself. So God became a man, one of us, lived a perfect sinless life and went to the cross as a sacrifice for sinful man. John the Baptist recognized that sin had to be paid for and that Jesus was the one to do it. When John saw Jesus approaching him at the beginning of his earthly ministry, John said, *"...Behold the lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world,"* (John 1:29). The issue was clear to John; sin had separated man from God and that sin had to be paid for if we were ever going to find forgiveness and reconciliation with the creator. John saw Jesus and the one who could satisfy the law of God and remove the penalty of our sin. The message that John spread everywhere he went was simple, repent.

God is not interested with any outward form, but inward cleansing. The only one who can approach God is the individual who has been cleansed from their own sin. The Psalmist made this very clear, *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully,”* (Psalm 24:3-4). The cleansing can only come through the channel that God says is acceptable, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (John14:6). If we try to come into god’s presence without dealing with our sin it is an affront to Him and we will not be accepted.

Amos records for us some very strong words from the Lord about those who try to worship Him while polluted by their sin, *“I hate, I reject, I will not accept, I will not hear,”* (Amos 5:21-23). John MacArthur offers this explanation of the passage in Amos, *“That does not mean that God hates sacrifices and offerings and festivals and music. God desires all those things because he instituted them. But, when those instruments of worship are tainted with sin, God hates them.”*⁴³

The Scriptures have been given to us to point us to Jesus. Speaking to his disciples Jesus said, *“Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me,”* (John 5:39). The way to God is through the knowledge of the written word. The Scriptures tell of the total depravity of man, the need of a savior, the way to the savior and the identity of the savior, all critical knowledge in our path to God. If we will believe by faith what the Scriptures teach we can have our sins paid for and then be accepted by the Father into His presence. The apostle Paul gives us a step by step process for coming to God in Romans 10:9-10, *“If you will confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall be believe in your heart that*

⁴³ Ibid., p. 74.

God raised him from the dead, thou shall be saved: for with the heart man believes unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” The process seems simple, but our sin nature, pride, fear, and a general sense of doubt create a major roadblock for anyone to come to Christ.

The process gets even more difficult when we understand that our sin nature has alienated us from God, resulting in no desire to seek God. To come to God requires an acknowledgment of our sin, and that sparks our pride creating a resistance to confessing our sin and need of a Savior. Pride for many people is the great stumbling block that they cannot get over; they refuse to concede that there is nothing they can do to satisfy God concerning their sin. We all like to think that there is something good in us that deserves God’s forgiveness. *“When real worship of Christ is genuine and complete, pride is eliminated,”* wrote William Temple who went on to say, *“For he whom we worship is humility itself incarnate.”*⁴⁶

It was pride that convinced Lucifer that he could rise up and exalt himself *above* God (Isaiah 14:14). Pride resulted in his rejection by God and total humiliation. Jesus humbles himself voluntarily and took on the form of man, and God the Father highly exalted him above all others; *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of thing sin heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,”* (Philippines 2:8-11).

If worship is the giving of glory to God, and it certainly is, then we must do those things which, in fact, give glory to God. Exalting the Lord Jesus is one clear way of accomplishing this requirement. It is the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our personal savior that is the ultimate glorification of God the Father. Paul writes, *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell,”* (Colossians 1:18-19). To dishonor the Son of God is to dishonor the one who sent him, God the Father. We cannot honor God by dishonoring the Son, we cannot worship God by ignoring the Son, in fact we cannot even approach the Father apart from His Son. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes unto the Father but by me,”* (John 14:6).

Keeping things in proper perspective will help us see our sin and God’s holiness. The result should be an acceptable offer of worship back to God. *“God is immutable, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Our response to that ought to be humble acceptable worship. It is easy to be proud if we focus on ourselves, but as soon as we start understanding what God is like we realize our lowliness and our response is a desire to give God glory.”*⁴⁷

The failure of some to see God as absolute holiness has resulted in a basic flaw in their approach to Him. Rather than viewing worship as a way of giving to God, many see worship only as a means of getting something from God. *“If we look upon worship only as a means of getting something from God, rather than giving to God, we make God our servant instead of our Lord, and the elements of worship become a cheap formula for selfish gratification.”*⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Warren Wiersbe, *“Real Worship,”* p. 147.

Seeing our own sin can only send us to our knees before God. Abraham, realizing his sinfulness, confessed in the presence of God that he was dust and ashes (Genesis 18). Job said after his pilgrimage, *“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee--- therefore I retract and I repent in dust and ashes,”* (Job 42:5-6). Ezra records for us his sense of shame as he came before the Lord to worship, *“O Lord God of Israel, thou are righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this. Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore,”* (Ezra 9:15; 10:1). When we truly see how sinful we really are it unlocks our sense of gratitude toward God for His mercy to us resulting in a heartfelt worship and praise for God’s mercy.

John MacArthur understands our need to see our own sinfulness, *“If you have never worshipped God with a broken and contrite spirit you’ve never fully worshipped God, because that is the only appropriate response to entering the presence of Holy God.”*⁴⁵ When Habakkuk cried out to God for an answer to his questions, he was absolutely astonished when God spoke to him. His response was complete and certainly understandable, *“When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself,”* (Habakkuk 3:16).

Satan will oppose our worship; material possessions can divert our worship, but neither is as damaging as a sinful unforgiven heart. Years ago a man named Robert Robinson wrote a song

⁴⁵ John Mac Arthur, *“The Ultimate Priority,”* p. 79.

that captures the evil and devastating results of our own sin nature. The title of the song is *“Come Thou Fount,”* and the last verse simply sums up the power of sin in our lives, *“Let thy goodness like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee: prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for the courts above.”*⁴⁶

Robinson knew his own tendencies and still at the end of his life he had fallen away from the God he loved. Truly we are our own worst enemies.

⁴⁶ Robert Robertson, *“The new Church Hymnal,”* (Lexion Music Inc., Newbury park, CA., 1976) p. 263.

Examples of Worship

When sin is finally recognized and confessed, the result is often an overwhelming sense of relief. The burden of carrying our sin and knowing that one day we will pay a price for it can simply crush you if not dealt with. It is easy to question whether or not one could ever understand God. But the Scriptures say we can understand the things that God has revealed about Himself and we can know Him on a personal level. Jeremiah recorded for us some important information concerning our knowing God, *“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for me with all your heart,”* (Jeremiah 29:13). Proverbs 2:3-5 says, *“Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”* It is clear that we must make an effort if we are to obtain the knowledge God speaks about. Jesus told his disciples to search the Scriptures if they wanted to find out about Him (John 5:39). Paul wrote, *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,”* (II Timothy 2:15).

Studying the Scriptures will provide illustrations and examples of acceptable worship. Once we understand that worship involves every area of life we can experience complete worship. Paul summarized this truth in I Corinthians 10:31, *“Whether then, you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.”* Simply put, worship is giving glory to God, so every aspect of our lives should be glorifying to God; thus an act of worship.

When we seek to worship God, Satan will oppose us with every ounce of strength he can muster. Paul describes this confrontation with Satan as a war that we are engaged in. Paul gives us a warning, *“No man that warreth entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he*

may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier,” (II Timothy 2:4). Warren Wiersbe believes that there are not many good soldiers in the Lord’s army because of their failure in this area of worship, due to unconfessed and ongoing sin in their lives. According to Wiersbe, *“We are not warriors because we are not worshippers. It would do our churches good to meditate on the worship scenes in the book of Revelation, and to notice that as the church worshipped, God gave His people power for witness and warfare.”*⁴⁷

There are many ways to worship God, but the first act of worship should be the result of repentance. Sin puts a barrier between us and God; therefore, it must be removed before any other act of worship can be accepted. King David sinned by his act of adultery with Bathsheba; the result was judgment from God (II Samuel 11:4). The Lord sent Nathan to David to confront him with his sin (II Samuel 12:1). When David was forced to look at his own sin, he admitted what he had done was an affront to God Himself (II Samuel 12:13). His next step was to confess, repent and ask God for His forgiveness, this was done by prostrating himself before the Lord, fasting and expressing his remorse for his actions (II Samuel 12:17). All of these acts were actually forms of worship back to the Lord; David was showing his recognition of the power and position of God. Even though David was in the process of being chastened by God he offered praise and worship back to the Lord. In Hebrews 12:6 we read that God chastens those He loves and if we never receive any chastening from God we are not part of His family. So we can even state that the chastening from God should provoke worship in us because it shows that we are His children. What God is demanding from us is an acknowledgement of our sin and a corresponding repentance because of it. Repentance is the key ingredient that is absolutely

⁴⁷ Warren Wiersbe, *“Real Worship,”* p. 157.

necessary in order to receive God's forgiveness. Ezra cried out to the people to repent and to turn away from their idols and to repent from their sins, (Ezra 14:6; 18:30).

In Luke 13:5 Jesus is talking with people who are asking him questions. One of their questions had to do with the eighteen people who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them. They wanted to know if the tragedy occurred because of some great sin in their lives, was it God's judgment upon these people? Jesus answered and simply said, *"Except you repent, you shall likewise perish."* Jesus went right to the heart of their need, they needed to repent, it did not matter what happened to the eighteen, what mattered was their condition before God.

There is always joy in heaven whenever anyone repents (Luke 15:7). Repentance is important to God, when we repent God is honored and our need to satisfied. It is in this process of repentance that I believe true worship thrives and blossoms into something beautiful in God's eyes.

John writing in the Book of Revelation describes some people who refused to repent, refused to submit to God and received the wrath of God in return. The judgment of God is described in Revelation 16:9, *"And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory."* True repentance results in our acknowledgement of our sin. Then our anger and bitterness toward God is turned into praise. Repentance leads to submission and submission to a proper relationship between God and man. When I honestly repent concerning the sin in my life I am acknowledging my accountability to God. We are told to submit to God and then rejoice over His direction and care for me. The issue here is contentment, being satisfied where I am and

with what is going on in my life at the moment. Contentment is a major problem for most people and they struggle with the command in Philippians 4:11 to be content regardless of their situation. Contentment is also the subject in II Thessalonians 5:18, *“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”* This verse implies that God is in charge of everything that takes place in the life of a believer, and whatever is happening God is involved. Since God will only do what is best for His children, I can relax knowing that God is at work, no matter how difficult the circumstances may be. Going through difficult times is hard, but it can be easier to deal with if we will trust the fact that God is at work for our good. God has also promised never to leave us or forsake us in any situation (Hebrews 13:5).

Any discussion concerning submission must include Job. The account of Job’s trials often excludes the idea of worship, but that is the one thing that is apparent throughout the account. Job worshipped God through his submission and acknowledgment that God was sovereign and that He never makes mistakes. The account begins by listing Job’s qualities; he was perfect and upright and he was one feared God, and hated evil (Job 1:1). The next verse lists the material possessions of Job: *“...seven sons, and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels...”* (Job 1:2). It is clear that Job possessed great wealth and the loss of everything was no small matter. Actually we are told that Job was the wealthiest man of his day (Job 1:3).

As the wealthiest man of his day, and one that feared God, he was a prime target for Satan. When Satan was before God he accused Job of serving the Lord simply for the material blessings he received (Job 1:9-10). Satan’s attacks were motivated by a desire to stop Job from

serving and worshipping the Lord. God, knowing what Satan was trying to do, used this situation to bring praise to Himself, strengthen the faith of Job and silence Satan.

The issue here was God's blessing and Job's praise. Satan suggested that if God would remove the blessings Job would curse God. In response God told Satan he could do whatever he wanted, but he could not touch Job (Job 1:12). What followed was an example of a spiritual conflict in heaven affecting a believer on earth. Job had no idea what was coming or why, but his response was a powerful witness and testimony to his faith and trust in God no matter what the circumstances.

Satan began immediately and swiftly to take away everything Job possessed (Job 1:13-19). The response of Job actually infuriated Satan, but it brought glory to God. After Satan destroyed everything and Job was informed by a servant of what happened we read, *"Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and saved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped,"* (Job 1:20). This response must have irritated Satan more than we can imagine. The very thing Satan wanted to erase He actually caused it to take place, worship by job to the Lord. Job worshipped God before he was afflicted and he worshipped God immediately after. What stands out in this situation is the fact that Job's worship was not the result of any material possession; the loss of his possessions had no effect on his willingness to worship God. Job knew the right thing to do was to worship God and in everything give thanks back to Him.

Job's response made Satan even more determined to do whatever he could to stop him from honoring God. Satan's next step is to ask God for permission to touch Job's body, to make him very uncomfortable physically. The Lord gave Satan permission but instructed him to stop

short of taking his life (Job 2:6). Free to inflict some discomfort on Job, Satan covers him with boils from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet (Job 2:7). As if that was not enough his wife said, *“Do you still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die,”* (Job 2:9). Suffering under the brutal physical attack of Satan and listening to his wife’s anger toward the Lord, Job refused the physical and emotional pressure to curse God. Instead Job continued to honor the Lord and did not sin, but continued to submit to God’s will for him in this very unpleasant situation. Even though Job did not understand why God had allowed all this to happen to him, he continued to trust the Lord and worship God. Job was tested and his true character came shining through, as God knew it would.

We have another example of worship in the life of Abraham. The one thing stands out in the life of Abraham was his unwavering devotion and trust in God. Our Lord demands devotion, *“You shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment,”* (Matthew 22:37, 38). If there is not total devotion to the Lord there will not be a sense of urgency concerning our obedience to the things of God. Webster defines devotion as *“Ardent affection; zealous attachment.”* Abraham certainly possessed this type of devotion to the Lord and was evident by his actions throughout his life.

In Genesis 22 God speaks to Abraham and tells him to take his only son Isaac to Moriah and there offer him up as a burnt sacrifice (Genesis 22:2). What a command, how could God possibly order Abraham to do such a thing, God forbid human sacrifices? I believe that Abraham would have been more willing to take his own life rather than the life of his only son. Abraham loved Isaac deeply, he was the son of promise, and God had miraculously provided

him in Abraham's old age, how could God now take him away. God had made a promise to Abraham that his seed would be great and Isaac was his only son; there would be no more, (Genesis 12:1-2). Yet, God is sovereign and Abraham, though confused trusted God.

Certainly Abraham had to be devoted totally to God to even consider such a command. Perhaps Satan was standing before God, as he did concerning Job, and accusing Abraham of loving Isaac more than God. What we see is Abraham, like Job, responding the right way and without hesitation. The very next day Abraham began his journey to Moriah to offer his son as a sacrifice to the Lord. Abraham displayed complete devotion to God's will. He did not understand why God commanded this act, but he was willing to obey God and trust him for the results. John MacArthur makes this observation; *"It seems incredible that Abraham, knowing that God was going to take the life of his own son, was able to see it as worship. He had devoted himself to worship no matter what the cost. He saw beyond the barriers to pain, difficulty, and the loss of his son, and worshipped. Some people do not worship God because they feel it may cause them a little sacrifice of time and effort. How far is that from being willing to plunge a knife in the chest of your own beloved son—and call it worship because God commanded it."*⁴⁸

We would have to agree that Abraham was obedient to the first commandment, *"Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,"* (Deuteronomy 6:5). Abraham's devotion was total and the Lord was glorified by it. What Abraham did was an act of worship; the placing of a higher value on God than on his own son.

⁴⁸ John MacArthur, *"The Ultimate Priority,"* p. 153.

The Lord can be worshipped by giving of one's self; Mary of Bethany is just one of many examples of this type of worship. John records for us the account of Mary's action toward the Lord (John 12:1-8). Six days before the Lord's final Passover with his disciples, they were in the home of Mary, sister of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the grave. As Jesus was sitting at the table, Mary came to him and began to pour spikenard over his feet and then wiped his feet with her hair (John 12:3). The house was filled with the aroma of the ointment. The ointment that Mary used was very expensive, yet she freely poured it on Jesus' feet. The disciples were less than encouraging to her actions of devotion and worship; they did not understand the significance of Mary's action. She was worshipping the Lord by an act of unselfish giving. Judas Iscariot rebuked her for being so wasteful and the basically the others agreed, but Jesus honored her in front of everyone by commending and approving her actions (John 12:7).

Mary showed real devotion to the Lord in front of others who did not approve of her actions, she was not concerned with their approval, her eyes and heart were on the Lord. She gave out of a heart of devotion and love for the Lord. Warren Wiersbe observed that, *"She did what she did in order to please Jesus Christ and not to impress the disciples. Because it was for Him, Mary did not count the cost. Cheap worship that only seeks to get by could never win the approval of the Lord."*⁴⁹

Mary had the same attitude as David when it came to worship and praise for the Lord. David understood that worship without cost is not worthy of the Lord. When David had sinned before the Lord by numbering the people (I Chronicles 21:17), an angel of the Lord came to him and told him to set up an altar at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (verse 18). As David was

⁴⁹ Warren Wiersbe, *"Real Worship,"* p. 83.

approaching the location he was greeted by Ornan, the owner of the property where the altar was to be built. Ornan, recognizing who David was, bowed down before him. David proceeded to ask Ornan for permission to build an altar on his land for the Lord. Ornan responded by offering to give David the Land, the altar, and the sacrifice for free. David, without hesitation said that he could not allow Ornan to do that. The answer by David showed his heart, *“And King David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost,”* (I Chronicles 21:24). *“The moment we start to count the cost, we stop worshipping God sincerely,” Warren Wiersbe.*⁵⁰

Our worship is a clear indicator as to the condition of our heart. Because of her unselfish act of worship, Mary brought joy to the heart of the Master. He was pleased with what she did. The blessing spread throughout the house. It brought out the best in Mary and the worst in Judas! She was not moved by the disciples’ criticism (they all agreed with Judas!), because her only desire was to please Jesus Christ.⁵¹ Mary gave willingly and out of a heart of love. Paul wrote, *“Every man according as he purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver,”* (II Corinthians 9:7).

Giving to God is an act of worship, because we are overcoming the basic human tendency to hang onto whatever we have. Giving to God recognizes that God is the source of everything we have; giving back to God acknowledges that our confidence is in Him and not in the things we possess. When we present our offerings and gifts before the Lord we are honoring Him. He expects more than just the material offerings; he expects our praise and love. In Revelation

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 55.

4:10-11 we read, *“The four and twenty elders fell down before him that sat on the throne, and worshiped him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”* The reason for praise is simple, He is worthy of all the praise we can give him. The reason we are to worship God is the same reason we praise Him, for He is worthy of our praise, deserves it and has earned it. In Leviticus 10:3 we read, *“This is it that the Lord spoke, saying, I will be glorified.”* Offering praise glorifies God; it shows others that God is important to the one praising Him. Psalms 50:23 declares, *“Whoso offers praise glorifies Him.”*

To praise God is to remember different aspects of His person and His actions. When we praise the Lord it should be for a specific reason. The Psalms are full of praise for God, but each example of praise has a reason for the praise. Here are just a few examples: *“I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness,”* (Psalm 7:17); *“I will praise thee, O Lord with my whole heart: I will show forth all thy marvelous works,”* (Psalms 9:1). We can praise the Lord with the spoken word, but singing praise to the Lord appears to be the preferred method. Different types of instruments can be used to offer praise (Psalm 33:2). Praise to the Lord can only come from those who are walking properly with the Lord in obedience to His word (Psalm 33:1).

Praise to God is a source of help when we are depressed or discouraged, *“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance,”* (Psalm 42:5). We should offer praise to God simply because He is good and regardless of my circumstances; *“I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O Lord, for it is good,”* (Psalm 54:6). Not only are we to offer praise to God,

but we should offer it everywhere we go; *“I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations,”* (Psalm 138:2). We are to praise Him for being our creator and sustainer (Psalm 139:14). We are to offer praise to him forever (Psalm 61:8). Our worship must include a heart overflowing with praise for God, overflowing with spontaneous adoration and glorification to God.

Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to our knowledge of God. If we are to understand the will of God, it is essential that we know the Scriptures. Many people do not understand that preaching the word of God is an act of worship. It is worship because the preaching of the word honors God and helps his people understand spiritual truths better. Preaching the word of God honors Him because it is an act of obedience. If we are to know God, we must study the Scriptures and preach them clearly and completely. When this is done, God is pleased and pours out His blessings as a result of our obedience in this area.

*“Great heights of adoration, praise, and worship can be reached by a devout congregation during the sermon, as the things of God pass before them.”*⁵² If everything is in proper order, people will see Jesus and not the preacher. Preaching should not be a display of personal abilities, aimed at impressing the congregation, but an earnest attempt to describe the person of Jesus in such a way that the congregation can see him and forget the preacher. The preaching should present the person of Jesus in a personal, even intimate way, not just deliver some intellectual facts. As a preacher I need to know Jesus on a personal level so I can share with the congregation what I have experienced personally, not just what I know about him. He

⁵² Ibid. p. 123.

needs to be personal to the preacher so that he can present him in a personal way to the congregation.

When we examine the experience of the two disciples from Emmaus we see that the explanation of the Scriptures ignites the heart with a passion for God. When Jesus explained the Scriptures to the men we are told that their hearts burned within them as they heard the explanation (Luke 24:32).

Preaching in many churches has become simply an academic exercise, lacking in emotional intensity it often simply leaves the hearers cold. The preacher who lacks personal emotion usually settles for style over substance. We become obsessed with outlines, concepts, and the principles rather than getting excited about the impact the truth of God can have on my everyday life. The impact of preaching is diminished by a presentation that lacks fire and conviction. Why should the hearers get excited if the speaker shows no heart for what is being said? Another problem with the reception of the message being preached comes from the hearers who are looking for the easy, no hassle, and no struggle to their faith. People seem to be looking for the treasures from the Word of God without the trials the Scriptures warn us about. We want to know the principles, but are unwilling to put them into practice in our daily lives, that takes effort and commitment. It is easy to get excited over the concepts, but then get very upset over what it takes to apply them. People want blessings without obedience, worship without cost, and freedom without responsibility.

I do not agree with Harry Emerson Fosdick on very many things, but one thing I do agree with him, *“The purpose of preaching is not to explain a subject but to achieve an object. We*

*are so wrapped up in the content that we have forgotten the intent.*⁵³ The intent should be to honor God and bring his people closer to him. People will be drawn to the Lord as they get a glimpse of him through the preaching of the Word.

Preaching is one way of worshiping God, but it can also be used to prevent worship. The preacher can get so wrapped up in the preparation of a message that he loses sight of the reason for the message. G. Campbell Morgan said, *“It is possible for a man to analyze the Bible and lose it in the process, to prepare a synthesis of the Bible and lose his soul at the work; to make himself perfectly familiar with the letter, and to find out that the letter kills because he has lost touch with the spirit.”*⁵⁴

When preaching is an act of worship, the listener’s heart is stirred by the image of God, convicted by the Spirit of God, and moved to action by word of God. The Spirit of God can touch the soul with the reality of the message. Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost possessed these qualities. We can see all three items in Peter’s message, *“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:37). The hearers were convicted; the Holy Spirit opened their eyes and they saw Jesus differently than before. Peter was able to instruct them concerning their need of a savior and about three thousand souls responded to the call and received Christ as their Messiah (Acts 2:41). This is an example of preaching as an act of worship, and listening to the preaching as an act of worship. The people heard the Word of God and immediately responded to what they heard. *“When the sermon is an*

⁵³ Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

academic lecture, no response is required except 'I agree' or 'I disagree.' But when a sermon is presented as in integral part of Christian worship, the listener must do something about the revelation of God that the Spirit brings to him."⁵⁵

The Reverend James Denney once asked this question, *"What can be more truly described as worship, than hearing the Word of God as it ought to be heard, hearing it with penitence, with contrition, with faith and self-consecration, with vows of new obedience? If this is not worship in spirit and in truth, what is?"*⁵⁶ Preaching does not interfere with other acts of worship when it is an act of worship. Whether singing, praising God, giving to God, or preaching the Word of God we should be in a mental state of worship to God.

It is the preaching that can make the Word of God personal and relevant. Principles and facts will not help unless they become challenging to the mind of the hearer, there must be the challenge to apply the facts and principles. A congregation will never be moved to the point of repentance and response unless the preaching is an act of worship by the preacher. A.W. Tozer said, *"There is hardly anything as dull and meaningless as Bible doctrine taught for its own sake. Truth divorced from life is not truth in its Biblical sense, but something else and something less... Truth engages the citadel of the human heart and is not satisfied until it has conquered everything there. The will must come forth and surrender its sword. It must stand at attention to receive orders, and those orders it must joyfully obey. Short of this, any knowledge of Christian truth is inadequate and unavailing."*⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Frank Cairns, *"The Prophet of the Heat,"* (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1934), pp. 56-57.

⁵⁶ Robert E. Webber, *"Worship Is a Verb,"* p. 128.

⁵⁷ A.W. Tozer, *"Of God and Men,"* (Harrisburg, PA.: Christian Publications, 1960), p. 26.

The purpose of preaching is to show people the real God of the Bible. When the Lord Jesus Christ is presented, people will be changed one way or the other. Unless the pastor is in touch with the Lord there is no possible way for the people to see the Lord through him. A.W. Tozer points out, *“The scribes who sat in Moses’ seat were not the victims of error; they were the victims of their failure to experience the truth they taught.”*⁵⁸

Warren Wiersbe wrote, *“The kind of preaching the unsaved world needs to hear is not manufactured from books, although serious study is certainly necessary. You do not build a sermon by borrowing pieces from Spurgeon, Billy Sunday, the morning newspaper, and the notes in your study Bible. A message from God is the living consequence of a vital meeting with God during which you worshipped Him and permitted His truth to set fire to your soul. When the minister’s study turns into a sanctuary, a holy of holies, then something transforming will happen as the Word of God is proclaimed.”*⁵⁹ Preaching is vital, but only powerful if presented as an act of worship to God.

It is easy to worship God when we see the blessings flow or the miracles working. But, we need to remember that everything was created to glorify God, *“That in all things he might have the preeminence,”* (Colossians 1:18). It is hard to accept but even rebellion will be used to glorify the Lord. Ultimately all men will give God glory, either willingly or unwillingly, but they will glorify the Lord. John MacArthur points out, *“The glory God gets from the righteous is what especially pleases Him. They give Him glory willingly. In fact, giving Him glory is the*

⁵⁸ A.W. Tozer, *“The Root of the Righteous,”* p. 55.

⁵⁹ Robert E. Webber, *“Worship is a Verb,”* p. 128.

*special calling of God's people."*⁶⁰ In Isaiah 43:21 God says, *"The people whom I formed for myself, will declare my praise."* First Peter 2:9 says concerning the church, *"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you."*

Unbelieving men may not want to give God glory, but they will. Pharaoh was determined not to glorify God, but the Lord had other ideas. The Lord declared in Exodus 14:17, *"I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen."* God had a message for Pharaoh, *"Indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you my power, and in order to proclaim my name through all the earth,"* (Exodus 9:16).

When we examine the circumstances surrounding Pharaoh's rebellion it becomes easier to realize that even those who have no interest in glorifying God will ultimately do so. Since God uses the wicked to glorify Himself, he can certainly use the suffering of His people to do the same. Pharaoh's resistance to God did not prevent him from doing the very thing he was trying to avoid, honoring God. It is far better to give God the glory He deserves willingly. First Thessalonians 5:18 declares, *"In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."* There are often situations that come into the life of a believer that makes this verse very hard to accept, but that is exactly what is needed, faith that God will do the right thing, no matter how difficult the situation may be. Suffering can strain our faith to the limit, but God has a plan and purpose for it all. Paul understood this principle, *"...so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body. Whether it be by life, or by death,"* (Philippians 1:20).

⁶⁰ John MacArthur, *"The Ultimate Priority,"* p. 131.

Jesus speaking about suffering said, *"...the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you,"* (John 15:20). In John 16:33 Jesus said, *"...in the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* Suffering seems inescapable, but even so we should use the pain and suffering as well as the joy and happiness to worship the Lord. Peter explains, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."* On the one hand men may speak evil of Christ, but on the other the persecution of the believer will glorify Christ.

Hebrews eleven has been called the faith chapter of the Bible, giving the names of those who by their faith distinguished themselves in the face of great trials. The writer of Hebrews talks about the great victories that were won, but in verse 35, almost without a second thought, the writer begins to describe those who suffered great persecution and death. It seems as though those who conquered and those who were conquered are looked at equally by God. The issue was not a military victory or a physical death, but the fact that they all displayed tremendous faith in God. Whether they lived or died does not seem to be the emphasis at all. For in life and death God was glorified by their faith, for some even unto death. Job is a great example of the attitude of these saints, when facing terrible trials and having lost everything he owned Job said, *"Though He slay me yet will I trust Him,"* (Job

13:15). These saints had an eternal perspective, not just a here and now concern. Hebrews 11:39 concludes by saying, *“And these all having obtained a good report through faith.”*

The apostle John records for us the Lord’s statement to Peter concerning the manner in which he would glorify the Lord. Peter’s physical life would end on a cross, suffer and die much like his Lord, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go. Now he said this, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God,”* (John 21:18-19). Even in death we can and should glorify God, but this attitude takes a real understanding of our position in Christ and a trust that God will be with us all the way. Peter, like many that followed him, paid the ultimate price to glorify the Lord.

In the book of Daniel we read of three young men confronted with the question of honoring God and facing death, or disowning God and living. The three young men were told they would be killed if they did not fall down and worship the idol of King Nebuchadnezzar. Refusing to bow down to the idol, the king ordered them to be thrown into a fiery furnace. Before they were put into the furnace the king gave them one last chance to change their mind. The young men stood firm and gave this reply to king Nebuchadnezzar, *“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up,”* (Daniel 3:18). In the heat of the furnace God was glorified by their faith and willingness to die. In an act of divine grace God protected them in the fire, bringing honor to the three and glory to God.

It is easy to look at their trial and think it was a small matter, not a big deal, but they did not know at the time that God would deliver them; in fact, they probably had accepted the fact that they were going to die. What stands out here is the fact that they were facing death because of their faith, yet were unwilling to deny their God even though it meant their physical death. In this case, God was glorified through the deliverance of his children out of the furnace.

Closely connected with suffering is our responsibility to witness. This might seem strange at first thought, but there are many illustrations that tend to bring the two side by side. Paul's life is full of situations that involved witnessing and suffering as a result of his witness. When Paul (who was previously named Saul) was confronted by the Lord on the road to Damascus, he was blinded by the presence of the Lord. Shortly after this encounter Paul was lead to one named Ananias, a believer and servant of the Lord. The Lord told Ananias that Paul was a chosen vessel and that he would be a witness for the Lord and suffer many things for the Lord (Acts 9:15-16). Suffering and witnessing for the Lord seem to go hand and hand. Perhaps many refuse to witness because they have been humiliated or embarrassed by those they tried to witness too. If we do not understand the connection our witness will be diminished or non-existent.

Stephen was the first person to suffer death as a result of his witness for the Lord. The account is recorded in Acts. Stephen was speaking about the Lord and the people listening became infuriated when Stephen accused them of killing the Messiah. The Jews who were listening immediately responded by stoning Stephen to death (Acts 7:54). Often there is a

high price for speaking up and speaking out for the Lord. Stephen glorified the Lord with his witness and then his death.

Standing there watching the stoning of Stephen was Saul, this was prior to Saul's salvation and conversion. Little did he know that shortly he would be the one suffering for his witness for Jesus. In Antioch Paul and Barnabas were witnessing, but the reception was very hostile, *"But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas,"* (Acts 13:50). Paul goes on to Lystra, witnesses concerning the Lord, is stoned there (Acts 14:19). Everywhere Paul went the persecution followed, every time he witnessed for the Lord he suffered physically. The persecution did not stop Paul from witnessing for the Lord. Certainly Paul had a firm conviction about what he was doing; the meeting with Jesus had a life changing impact. When we come face to face with Jesus it will change our lives as well.

Paul was not the only one who had a difficult time because of his witness. Peter was cast into prison (Acts 12:4); James the brother of John was killed with the sword (Acts 12:1); John the Baptist had his head cut off by Herod (Matt 14:11). It was not a small matter to witness for the Lord in the earlier years of the church, but it is still difficult today. While most of us would never face death as a result of our witness, there is still a struggle to do so.

While witnessing can produce some difficult persecution, it can also have some amazing results for good. One clear example of the power of the gospel came in the life of Cornelius, a Roman Centurion who listened to Peter and then responded in faith to the message (Acts

10). There was a string of conversions from Cornelius coming to faith in Christ, his whole household also heard the message and believed.

On the day of Pentecost Peter publicly witnessed to the multitudes and three thousand people came to faith that day (Acts 2:41). A clear sincere witness is a powerful tool in reaching the lost, while some will respond in anger, some will respond in faith. We need to constantly remind ourselves that this is a spiritual battle, *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places,”* (Ephesians 5:12). *“The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn,”* (Martin Luther). Thomas Moore has said, *“The devil cannot endure to be mocked.”* Satan is a powerful enemy, but the power we possess is far greater than anything Satan can throw against us, *“Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world,”* (1 John 4:4).

It seems like an impossible task, but twelve men did change the world. Jesus called twelve and sent them out into the world with the message of redemption and forgiveness. *“They left the world far different from what it had been before they came. How did they do it? They had no financial backing, no elaborate organization, no social pull, no prestige, no churches in which to worship, and no committees. They were outnumbered, persecuted, forbidden to preach, and finally killed,”* (H. S. Vigeveno).⁶¹ They did it through constantly witnessing for the Lord Jesus. The disciples took the Lord seriously when He said, *“Go therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son,*

⁶¹ H.S. Vigeno, *“Thirteen Men Who Changed the World,”* (Glendale, CA: G/L Publications, 1966), p. 2.

and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," (Matthew 28:20).

The Experience of Worship

Worship is a very personal experience that can vary greatly from one church to another and one person to another. Over the years much has been written and said about the form or experience of worship. There are two issues that dominate this subject, first is the practice of worship growing up. The way a person is raised is an overwhelming influence on how they see the proper method of worship as an adult, but that is nothing more than a comfort level not a measuring rod for correctness. Which brings us to the second issue, which really is the first as far as importance, and that is whether or not our worship is accepted by the Lord? The fact that we may be comfortable with our form of worship does not guarantee that it is acceptable to God.

In Genesis chapter four we have an example of two different people worshiping God in two different ways, one was acceptable and one was rejected. The account centers around Cain and Abel, each came before the Lord to offer worship in the form of an offering. Abel was a shepherd, a keeper of flocks, and his brother Cain tilled the land, raising crops. Both men decided to bring to God an offering as part of their worship. Cain brought what he had grown, the fruit of the ground (Genesis 4:3), but Abel brought an offering from his flock (Genesis 4:4). The Lord accepted Abel's offering, but Cain's was rejected by God (verse 5). At first glance it is easy to be confused over the rejection of Cain's offering, after all he brought what he was able to give and from the abundance of his crop, which he worked for. However, the issue here is obedience, Cain was told what he was to bring to the Lord, and he decided to bring something else, something different from what God demanded. At the heart of this action seems to be a prideful spirit, Cain wanted to give something he had

worked for, something he had accomplished. If he was to bring what God demanded Cain would have to go to his brother and get the offering from him, from his flock, which would eliminate any credit from Cain.

When Cain brought his offering it was rejected by the Lord and Cain became very angry (Genesis 4:5). The Lord responded to Cain's anger by asking him why he was angry. Cain had no right to be angry; it was God who was offended by Cain's disobedience. God goes on to say, *"If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin lies at the door,"* (Genesis 4:7). If Cain had offered the proper sacrifice his worship would have been accepted, but he failed to obey God and God rejected what Cain was offering to God. What is taking place here is not a rejection of Cain, but a rejection of his offering. Cain wanted to worship God his way without regard for what the Lord required. The Lord told Cain clearly that acceptable worship will produce joy, *"If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up,"* (Genesis 4:7). The implication is that Cain knew what God required but refused to give it. This is self-styled worship, it was rejected then and it will be rejected now. Cain's worship was rejected because he failed to follow God's instructions. Abel was accepted, not because he was better than Cain, but due to his obedience in following instructions from God correctly.

All of which brings us back to the first issue, how we were raised in regards to the form of worship we experienced growing up. Because we are comfortable with a form does not mean it is correct. There are times that our heritage is a hindrance to coming before the Lord in praise and adoration that truly is acceptable to God. What we are used to can prevent us from seeking or accepting something that is very different from our experience,

yet may be exactly what God is demanding from His people. The answer to this issue lies in our willingness to search the Scriptures and find those passages that deal with worship and compare our practice with the written word.

There are times when worship demands great faith on the part of the worshipper. Abraham honored the Lord with his life and worshipped Him faithfully. But, on one particular day his willingness to obey God and worship Him as God was requiring presented him with a huge challenge. He was commanded by God to worship Him in a way that must have shocked Abraham deeply. God's command forced Abraham to draw on every ounce of faith he possessed in order to obey. This special act of worship would result in the blessings of God, but the carrying out of the command must have been the hardest thing Abraham was ever confronted with. He was told by God to offer his only son as a sacrifice to God in the form of a burnt offering. God could not have asked anything harder of Abraham than this. To offer his only son as a blood sacrifice was the ultimate test of his faith. The pain that must have gone through Abraham when he heard the command, the questions he must have wanted to ask, the energy to do such a thing cannot truly be put into words. We know the outcome now, but Abraham did not have that luxury. The question was a simple one. Did Abraham see his worship to God as the supreme responsibility of his life?

This account makes it very clear how much God values our worship and that nothing should stand in the way of giving to God what He truly deserves, our unrestricted love and obedience. Abraham must have felt tremendous pain thinking about offering his son, but he immediately responded. The very next day he started out on the journey God had commanded him to undertake (Genesis 22:3). From the moment Abraham decided to obey

the Lord, he was effectively worshipping God. His act of obedience showed the real value he placed on serving God. This act of worship was painful, yet his obedience ultimately resulted in his faith being strengthened and glory being given to God. The result of Abraham's obedience through sincere and complete devotion to the Lord resulted in an outpouring of God's blessings to him (Genesis 22:17).

Joshua was another one who had a unique experience in worshipping the Lord. One day he was near Jericho when he saw what appeared to be a man with his sword drawn. Since Joshua was involved fighting for the land they had recently entered, he was concerned who this warrior was and whether or not he was going to have to defend himself. So Joshua asked this stranger, are you for us or against us? The answer provoked an instant response from Joshua when the stranger said, *"Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come,"* (Joshua 5:14). Joshua immediately fell on his face to the earth, and offered worship. Joshua said unto him, *"What saith my Lord unto his servant,"* (Joshua 5:15). The captain told Joshua that he was standing on holy ground and to lose his shoe off his foot (verse 15).

Joshua's response was proper and the only right thing to do in the presence of the Lord, fall down before Him. Here the worship was spontaneous and not prearranged. To see the Lord is to immediately bow before Him. Paul wrote, *"At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,"* (Philippians 2:10). The title "The Captain of the host of the Lord," was another way of identifying the Lord as Christ Jesus, if this were not the pre-incarnate Christ he would not have accepted the worship from Joshua.

There is no doubt as to the identity of the one confronting Joshua. We know that he was not an angel because angels do not accept worship. The book of Revelation describes John as falling down at the feet of an angel who was speaking to him. When John prostrated himself before the angel he was immediately told to stand up and not to worship the angel. John recorded this event, *“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, see thou do it not. I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,”* (Revelation 19:10). Since the person Joshua saw accepted his worship, we know that it was the Lord.

The worshipper who is accepted by God must do more than follow simple forms and repeat memorized prayers. The true worshipper will possess an inner determination to remove the obstacles that can keep him from God. David speaking to Solomon said, *“And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever,”* (I Chronicles 28:9).

David pointed out to Solomon that acceptable worship must involve a proper heart attitude. There must be a willing mind surrendered to God’s control. Anyone who honestly wants to find God and to know Him can. The prophet Isaiah wanted to see God and when he drew near to God his desire was meant and God revealed himself to the prophet. We can see a very vivid example of worship when look at Isaiah’s response to the vision of God gave him in Isaiah 6.

Warren Wiersbe describes Isaiah's experience as a "*fourfold experience of worship; and in this sense, his experience relates to us today. He saw something—Christ in glory; he heard something—the heavenly praises; he felt something—the cleansing power of God; and he did something—he volunteered for difficult service.*"⁶²

Once again we can see that worship involved seeing the Lord, or at least getting a sense of who He is by the revelations God provides for us. Jesus must be central in any type of worship we are involved with if it is going to be meaningful to us and acceptable to Him. If he is not present and honored, there is no worship. Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and it produced a sense of unworthiness in him and praise and adoration to God. John relates to this event and clearly understands that the vision Isaiah saw was the pre-incarnate Christ (John 12:41). Because Isaiah was seeking God and his heart and mind were in a proper order, he saw Jesus sitting on a throne, what a marvelous vision that must have been for him (Isaiah 6:1).

Isaiah also heard something in the middle of his worship experience, the voices of the Seraphim's crying out, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory,*" (Isaiah 6:3). We all recognize the fact that this world is tainted by sin, but the glory of God can be seen everywhere by those who want to see Him (Romans 1:20). Isaiah realized his own sinfulness and was shaken.

Isaiah saw the Lord and he heard singing and praises, but he also felt something that is very important to understand. As Isaiah continued in worship, he felt the pain of his own sinfulness. The Seraphim came and touched his mouth cleansing him from his sin (Isaiah

⁶² Warren Wiersbe, "*Real Worship*," p. 78.

6:7). He felt the pain of sin and then the joy of cleansing. What good is a worship experience which only illuminates our sin and does not remove it? Only Jesus can remove our sin (John 1:29). The Seraphim touching the lips of the prophet was symbolic, Christ had not yet died for the sin of the world on the cross at Calvary. We worship Jesus because he only can remove the sting of sin and its consequences. Isaiah saw the Lord Jesus in all of His glory and received the cleansing. *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14).*

“It is unfortunate that we have minimized the importance of feelings in our experience of worship. We preach about presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), but then we want to anesthetize our nervous system and eliminate normal emotional responses. Our churches are filled with icy people like Michael, David’s wife, who criticized her husband because he was too fervent in his worship (II Samuel 6:20). While we certainly want to avoid shallow emotionalism, we dare not grieve the Holy Spirit in our desire to be proper.”⁶³

It is very difficult for many people to freely respond to the Lord in their worship because of intimidation by other people. The fear of responding in a manner not approved can be stifling and overwhelming. The fear of ridicule or criticism can totally smother our emotional responses to the Lord.

Isaiah’s worship went further than seeing, hearing, and feeling. Because of his worship experience, Isaiah responded to the Lord by offering to serve. I believe that there is a lack of volunteers in the church today because very few people truly worship God in the manner

⁶³ Ibid., p. 79.

that God expects, total surrender to Him. Isaiah saw the Lord, and then he saw the need. His response was simple, *“Here am I send me”* (Isaiah 6:8). Speaking on this text Alexander MaClaren wrote, *“The previous experiences made Isaiah quick to hear God’s call and willing to respond to it by personal consecration. Take the motive-power of redemption from sin out of Christianity, and you break its mainspring so that the clock will only tick when it is shaken. It is the Christ who died for our sins to whom men say, ‘Command what Thou wilt, and I obey.’”*⁶⁴

Stephen was another one who sought the Lord. When he saw the great need he responded by giving witness to the Jews concerning Jesus. Acts 7 records the response of the people to Stephen’s message of hope and forgiveness through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Stephen understood the need for forgiveness and he was willing to share the good news with his people, but they were unwilling to accept the testimony of Stephen. The response of the people was very emotional; they were deeply angered by the message of Stephen and responded by stoning him to death. Here was a case of people not liking the message so they kill the messenger. The problem was a lack of response to the message of salvation provided by God through Stephen. Their hearts were not seeking God; therefore, they could not grasp the message presented by Stephen. No one likes to be told that they are a sinner and in this case they were told that they had killed the very one they were hoping would come and deliver the nation from bondage.

Stephen gave his life in response to his desire to honor God, and in fact his death was an act of worship before the Lord. Stephen’s actions brought a very impressive response from

⁶⁴ Alexander MaClaren, *“Expositors of Holy Scripture,”* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprint 1971), Vol 5, p.22.

God at the moment he needed it most. We have to conclude that God was at work in this situation and Stephen was given a glimpse of heaven, *“Being full of the holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,”* (Acts 7:56). There is a common thread in all acts of true worship; the worshipper sees Jesus in one way or another.

Individual worship is important, but so is congregational worship. The writer of Hebrews makes a point of believers coming together in corporate worship, stating that we are not to forsake the gathering of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25). There is a powerful benefit to corporate worship as we gather together to praise and honor God. Coming together gives us encouragement by sharing with one another what God is doing in our lives.

Our attitude once again is a key ingredient in our worship. When Jesus was talking to the woman at the well the whole idea of worship was brought up by the woman. She asked the Lord where people should worship; the Samaritans had developed their own place of worship separate from the Jews. Jesus seems to be pointing out that the one group (Samaritans) had a desire to worship God, but lacked understanding. While the other group (the Jews) had clear instructions, but lacked the real desire to know God as He is. Therefore, Christ’s call to worship in “spirit and in truth” deals with both situations. Our worship must involve the emotions (a desire to worship correctly) as well as factual correctness. Jesus left no doubt as to what the truth was, declaring *“I am the way the truth and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me,”* (John 14:6).

The emphasis upon the written word is clear in II Timothy 2:15, *“Study to show yourself approved a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* It is through the written word that individuals learn of God (Romans 10:17) and it is the written word that sets the guidelines for corporate worship. Congregational worship is recorded in Nehemiah, chapter 8. Here we have clearly presented the order of worship as Ezra lead the people. The setting was Jerusalem immediately following the rebuilding of the wall under the direction of Nehemiah. When all was finished, Ezra was told to read the scrolls in front of the people. A pulpit was made for the speaker so all could see him. Ezra read from morning until midday and they all gave attention to the reading. The passage is very clear, *“Ezra opened the book and all the people stood and when Ezra blessed the Lord the people all answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up of their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground,”* (Nehemiah 8:6). The people recognized the importance of Scripture and responded accordingly by standing at the reading of God’s word.

All acceptable worship is the result of a heart moved by the truth of God as He is revealed through His word. In this case God was revealed through the reading of His word before the congregation of Israel. We cannot honor God unless we honor His word, it is impossible to be accepted by God and reject His written word.

When the word of God is central in your life and worship, it will control your actions and attitude toward everything. The Scriptures give us a standard to live by and instructions for worship. Psalm 47:7 says, *“Sing ye praises with understanding.”* Worship is more than uncontrolled emotions or meaningless functions void of substance and understanding.

Worship has nothing to do with our situation at the moment, Paul worshiped God while he was in prison and chained to a Roman guard. Stephen worshipped God while he was being stoned to death by the crowds. It is a spontaneous response to the revelation of God and His presence in our lives. Worship must come from a sincere heart that has been convicted over its sin, overflowing with thanksgiving and overwhelmed by the holiness of God. Worship in praise, prayer, giving, singing, and a life surrendered to the will of God.

Worshipping collectively can accomplish some powerful things that cannot be done individually. Collectively we are stronger because we reinforce each other, hold each other up when weak and encourage one another when we struggle. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, *“And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”* Collectively we can raise our voices together in volume, pray in one accord and edify one another. Evelyn Underhill wrote, *“The corporate life of worship...checks religious egotism, breaks down devotional barriers, obliges the spiritual highbrow to join in the worship of the simple and ignorant, and in general confers all the supporting and discipling benefits of family life.”*⁶⁵

Most people see worship as only taking place in the local church building. Warren Wiersbe says, *“We do not go to church to worship because worship ought to be the constant attitude and activity of the dedicated believer. We go to church to worship publicly and corporately.”*⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Evelyn Underhill, *“Worship,”* (London: Nisbet and Cor., Ltd., 1936), p. 61.

⁶⁶ Warren Wiersbe, *“Real Worship,”* p. 79.

God desires our worship, and wants us to come into His presence on a regular basis with praise and adoration. In order for us to do this it was necessary for God to make a provision, to pay the price, to make the sacrifice needed to wash away our sins, cleanse us from all unrighteousness and make us holy and acceptable in His sight. This was accomplished by the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for the payment of the sin of the world. Because of all that God has done for us Hebrews 10:22 becomes possible, *“...draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water.”*

The Results of Worship

The results of acceptable worship are many. When a person is truly living a life of worship before the Lord several things will be evident, *“First essential condition for true worship is total submission. Second essential condition is Christ alone should be glorified.”*⁶⁷ Paul was a good example of a person living a life of worship before the Lord. He wrote, *“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content,”* (Philippians 4:11). Worship of the Lord Jesus Christ produced a life yielded and content in every way possible for Paul. He had submitted every aspect of his life and circumstances to the Lord’s care.

*“If we do not keep close to the Lord, we will fall into self pity and a complaining spirit.”*⁶⁸ Paul certainly had as much to complain about as anyone, yet he never did. His life was full of heartache, pain, and persecution; but only praise came out of his mouth. Paul’s attitude was, *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death,”* (Philippians 1:20). We cannot praise God and complain at the same time, complaining destroys any possibility of praise.

Peter talked about persecution and praise, *“If any be persecuted as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God,”* (I Peter 4:14-16). Persecution and complaining certainly are not the same. We can be persecuted and still praise God, but that is impossible when we choose to complain. Peter says that we are to praise God in spite of

⁶⁷ Joseph S. Carroll, *“How to Worship Jesus Christ,”* (Great Commission, South Carolina 1984), p. 30.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

persecution, *“To suffer for Him is the supreme honor to His holy name. It says you count Him as ultimate.”*⁶⁹

John MacArthur says, *“True worship will produce a life of contentment, regardless of circumstances. Contentment testifies to the wisdom and sovereignty of God and thereby glorifies Him. Discontent is essentially rebelliousness. The discontented person is, in effect, blaming God.”*⁷⁰ Paul’s life was marked by persecution, yet he never blamed God or complained over the unfairness of how he was being treated by others. Instead of anger Paul showed a sense of contentment and calmness in all situations, and continued to worship and to experience the joy of worship.

Paul wanted to see God and to understand Him. He wrote, *“That I may know Him, and the fellowship of his sufferings,”* (Philippians 3:10). *“True worship should enable man to know God in God’s way---not according to tradition, not in terms of orthodoxy, not in terms of one’s own peace of mind. Sentimental songs, poems, exercises, and hollow forms and ceremonies may be injurious.”*⁷¹ John MacArthur suggests that, *“Worship is all that we are, reacting rightly to all that He is.”*⁷²

As we properly approach God in worship, we will experience the blessing of God. *“The life that honors God is the only life God honors.”*⁷³ Because obedience to God’s standard is an act of love (John 14:23), God responds in love. The response from God changes the life of the worshipper by giving back peace, joy, contentment, and motivation. J. B. Phillips recognized

⁶⁹ John Mac Arthur, *“The Ultimate Priority,”* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), p. 143.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 143.

⁷¹ Edna Baxter, *“Learning to Worship,”* (Valley Forge, PA., Judson Press, 1965), p. 16.

⁷² John Mac Arthur, *“Ultimate Priority,”* p. 147.

⁷³ Ibid., p.146.

this truth when he said, *“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remake you so that our whole attitude of mind is changed.”*⁷⁴ If worship will do anything, it will be a transforming experience that is noticeable internally and externally by others. The cold hard fact is this, *“Every Christian is either a conformer or a transformer. We are either fashioning our lives by the pressure from without or we are transforming our lives by power from within. The difference is worship!”*⁷⁵

When we worship the Lord, our lives will reflect that worship, it has to show if our hearts are right, being right in heart will produce a right action without. We simply will continue to be molded by the Lord into His image; our worship is part of the process of change that God wants to accomplish in each of His children. Another way to part this, *“They that make them (idols) are like unto them: so is everyone who trusts in them,”* (Psalm 115:8).

*“If the Psalmist is correct, and I think that he is, then those who worship false gods eventually become blind, deaf, dumb, weak, and immobile—spiritually speaking. If we become like the god we worship—whether material or imaginary—we can never rise above the god that we manufacture for ourselves.”*⁷⁶ Therefore, what we are and what we do are both determined by what we worship.

The fact that true worship changes people actually is a reason some shy away from any worship experience. Some people are content where they are and have no desire to change anything in their lives. These people do not want to experience anything that will cause them to think, struggle with issues, examine truths, or pressure them to deal with things in

⁷⁴ Quoted in *“Real Worship,”* by Warren Wiersbe, p.31.

⁷⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *“Real Worship,”* p. 31.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.35.

their lives. *“Many Christians do not want a transforming experience in worship. So, when a true worshipper comes along, they are immediately threatened by his presence—true worshippers do not create problems, they reveal them.”*⁷⁷

Jesus was sinless yet he was persecuted by the religious leaders. He asked them on one occasion, *“Which of you convinceth me of sin?”* (John 8:46). His sinlessness revealed their sinfulness and they did not like it. Paul says the result of living in obedience to God will produce opposition, *“Those who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,”* (II Timothy 3:12). The persecution Paul spoke of can very often develop between two believers within a local church, the one seeking to honestly worship the Lord and the other who is resisting true worship. *“Most of the problems in the church today are not caused by spiritual growth and development. They are caused by carnal, worldly people—including church leaders—who stand in the way of spiritual growth.”*⁷⁸

If our worship does not produce change, we are not worshipping as we should. If our worship does not experience some opposition, we had best examine our worship procedures and practices. J.C. Pyle said, *“The best public worship is that which produces the best private Christians.”*⁷⁹ It is not God who changes because of our worship; it is us who change as we come into the presence of God through our prayers, praise and submission. *“God does not change. Change is either for the better or the worse. Both are inconceivable with God—He could not get any better and would not get any worse.”*⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.36.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.38.

⁷⁹ J.C. Pyle, *“Knots Untied,”* (London: James Clark and Co., Ltd., 1964), p. 234.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 235.

The goal of worship is to produce Christ likeness in each worshipper. The more we become conformed to His image the more opposition we will encounter. Jesus said, *“The servant is not greater than his lord,”* (John 13:16). If they persecuted the Lord who was perfect, what will they do to his servants?

Worship will bring glory to God, change the life of the worshipper and produce persecution. Worship also will produce a purified believer, *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, or sworn deceitfully,”* (Psalm 24:3-4). God and sin will not co-exist together, either we will have our sin cleansed by the blood of Jesus and then experience fellowship with God, or we will remain in our sinful condition and be isolated from God. To come into God’s presence in worship demands that we deal with our sin, and that means dealing with Jesus. Until we confess our sin and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior, we cannot approach God the Father in any fashion. John deals with this issue, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us,”* (I John 1:8-10). If we are constantly worshipping the Lord, then by necessity we are constantly dealing with our sin.

Another result of acceptable worship is giving a portion of what God has blessed us with back to Him. When a person sees God’s greatness the overwhelming response is to give back to God, to each other, and to strangers in need. Paul writes, *“Let every man according as he purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a*

cheerful giver,” (II Corinthians 9:7). When we are satisfied toward God we will want to give to promote the work of God to others.

When worship is right the worshipper will be a unique individual that stands out in a world of self-centered people. Others will see someone who is excited, energetic, evangelistic, and attractive by their behavior and love for people. When the church collectively worships God great things are bound to happen, Peter is a good example of God working through someone surrendered to His control. Peter led the people in a worship service on the Day of Pentecost that is still talked about today. The result was three thousand souls brought to faith in the Lord Jesus and became the foundation for the church, *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers,”* (Acts 2:41-42). The church could experience the same thing today if we honestly sought the Lord in worship. *“If the corporate worship in the church leaves people unchanged, the church is not really worshipping. If what goes on in the church service does not spur the saints to greater obedience, call it what you will, it isn’t worship. Worship always results in a transformation, and the church is edified by it.”*⁸¹

Finally when we worship God acceptably, the lost are evangelized, they will see and sense the presence of God and the Spirit of God will be felt. As we worship God we will see the needs around us as Isaiah did. His response was to offer himself in service, we can do no less. To see God is to see the sin around us and the needs of a lost world. A church

⁸¹ John MacArthur, *“The Ultimate Priority,”* p. 51.

dedicated to serving and glorifying God will reach the lost. *“When Christ is central in the heart of the man, what does the man want to do? He wants to tell others about Jesus, and he will do so effectively.”*⁸²

A.W. Tozer said, *“Worship was the missing jewel in the church’s crown.”*⁸³ While we cannot go back and change the past failures, we do not have to repeat them. Worship is critical because all of life is dependent upon the level of our worship. Nothing can be accomplished if worship is faulty, neglected, or rejected. A.W. Tozer commented, *“All things being equal our prayers are only as powerful as our lives.”*⁸⁴ Our lives can only be as powerful as our worship is meaningful. The Psalmist cried out, *“May my mediation be sweet to Him,”* (Psalms 104:34).

What does God do while we worship? *“He knows all things, so our worship does not surprise Him. He owns all things, so our gifts do not enrich Him. He is perfect in all His attributes, so our fellowship with Him cannot improve Him. When we witness to Him in praise, prayer, and giving what is accomplished in heaven? We may not be able to explain it, but God delights in His people and responds to their worship.”*⁸⁵

Unfortunately, it seems that iniquity is abounding everywhere, and the righteous are few and far between in the public arena. There is a critical, pharisaical coldness in many of our homes and churches toward real commitment and dedication to the service of the Lord. There is nothing more important than a major awakening of God’s people to the need to

⁸² Joseph Carroll, *“How to Worship,”* p. 14.

⁸³ Quoted in *“How To Worship,”* by Joseph Carroll, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Joseph Carroll, *“How To Worship,”* p. 5.

⁸⁵ A.W. Tozer, *“The Root of the Righteous,”* (Harrisburg, PA., Christian Publications, 1955), p. 81.

come into God's presence with a humble heart, and a broken spirit over sin. The church is staggering under the load of selfishness, worldliness, and blindness. All of which creates a coldness in the hearts of God's people toward each other, the lost and God Himself. The reality of our sin and the holiness of God have been lost in the midst of schedules, deadlines, programs, and financial pressures.

A puritan from some years ago understood the importance of worship. If we could only see and feel Jesus as this puritan did we could move forward in the work of the Lord and see great things happen.

He wrote:

Glorious God

"It is the flame of my life to worship thee, the crown and glory of my soul to adore thee, heavenly pleasure to approach thee, give me power by thy Spirit to help me worship now, that I may forget the world, be brought into fullness of life, be refreshed, comforted, blessed. Give me knowledge of thy goodness that I might not be over-awed by thy greatness, give me Jesus, Son of Man, Son of God, that I might not be terrified, but be drawn near with filial love, with holy boldness; He is my mediator, brother, interpreter, branch, daysman, lamb, him I glorify, in him I am set on high. Crowns to give I have none, but what thou hast given I return, content to feel that everything is mine when it is thine, and the more fully mine when I have yielded it to thee. Let me live wholly to my Savior, free from distractions, from carking care, from hindrances to the pursuit of the narrow way, I am pardoned through the blood of Jesus, give me a new sense of it, continue to pardon me by it, may I come every day to the

*fountain, and every day be washed anew, that I may worship thee always in spirit and in truth.”*⁸⁶

Worship is the real issue here, and it continues to be the driving force needed in each believer’s life that is determined to honor and serve the Lord. By God’s grace may we understand the importance of acceptable worship. Frederick W. Robertson wrote, *“It is not a thing which a man can decide, whether he will be a worshipper or not a worshipper, the only question is what will he worship? Every man worships—is born a worshipper.”*⁸⁷

Worship can be summed up by Psalm 150, *“Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to this excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.”*

The necessity of acceptable worship is far greater than most people can imagine. If there is one that God demands and Satan detests, it is worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ. May we be good soldiers of the Lord, offering acceptable worship no matter how much resistance Satan can throw at us.

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,”

(John 8:31-32).

⁸⁶ Warren Wiersbe, *“Real Worship,”* p. 98.

⁸⁷ John MacArthur, *“The Ultimate Priority,”* p. 157.