

True Worship Overcomes Barriers

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Worship involves all that is inside a person, all that is outside a person and all that takes place within the corporate assembly of God's people. William Temple gives a good definition of worship: "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, 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 and to devote the will to the purpose of God."

Worship is then all that we are, reacting to all that He is. But how can we be sure that our worship is accepted by God and what are the effects of worship upon our lives? These are two areas I would like to shed some lights on:

1. Acceptable Worship

Acceptable or true worship does not happen automatically. In a worship service, preparation is essential. It is important that the choir is prepared; and so must the musicians, the worship leader, the preacher and most importantly the worshipper. How does the worshiper prepare himself? Let me use this text from Hebrews 10:22: "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

The verse suggests four steps for preparation:

First: "Let us draw near with a sincere heart." The key word is 'sincerity' or 'with a true heart'. Hypocrisy is fatal to worship. Double-mindedness, preoccupation with self and apathy are often left unchecked in our coming into His presence to worship. Therefore we need to prepare ourselves with a sincere heart, free from spiritual adultery. This means only one God and Him only we serve and obey.

Secondly, "Let us draw near in full assurance of faith." In the Old Testament days, a worshipper depended on the ceremonies that pertained to the animal sacrifice to be accepted. Today, a new and better covenant has been made for us to come to God in worship. It is faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ that ushers us into God's presence to worship. Not by works or any other but by faith in the finished work in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "No man can come to the Father but by me."

Thirdly, "Let us draw near, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience." This we do it in humility because we recognize our unworthiness. We have no right on our own but through Christ's blood and His righteousness that we come into God's presence. How many of us take time to humble ourselves and come to the Father in complete dependence on Christ's righteousness? The spirit of independence must go and give place to the spirit of dependence and obedience and to the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us.

The **fourth** and final step has to do with purity. "Let us draw near, having our bodies washed with pure water." This speaks of daily confessing and spiritual purging which is necessary to deal with the sins of our humanness.

At the time of conversion, we were forgiven and a new birth took place, but this 'washing' has to do with our feet that pick up the dust in our daily walk in the sinful world. Jesus illustrates the need for such cleansing when He washed the feet of the disciples. The Muslims practice the washing of oneself before prayers. They recognize the need for cleansing; how much more should the Christians!

The daily confession and cleansing from defilement of sin is a prerequisite to acceptable worship. Many Christians quote 1 John 1:9 when dealing with sinners (and there is nothing wrong with that), but John was writing to the church. It is for the Christians who need to come daily into God's presence with thanksgiving, worship and prayer.

These four steps – sincerity, faith in Christ's finished work, humility and purity – are four essentials to prepare us to enter into God's presence to worship Him, and we will be drawn nearer to Him. When the worshipper is living in God's presence daily, he lives in the glow of His glory and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. True Worship Overcomes Barriers

Too few Christians experience the kind of worship that brings them into such victory. On the contrary, they complain that worship is difficult and that they face insurmountable barriers. But if you look again at the preparation that is necessary on the part of the worshipper, you will discover that it is also the answer to overcoming our barriers in worship. Let me name two major barriers in worship.

Firstly, sin is a barrier. Sin makes it hard for one to enter into worship. But if you come in sincerity, with faith in Christ's finished work, confessing your sins and cleansing yourself through the blood, you will see how much easier it is to worship God and enter into His presence.

Second, insubmission is a barrier. We need to depend on the finished work of Christ. It is not what we do or do not do that brings us merit. It is Christ's righteousness in us. It is obeying and yielding to the Holy Spirit's promptings and the encouragement of God's people to give thanks and praise.

When God's people worship as God intended them too, there are many wonderful results. Satan trembles and his kingdom is pushed back. Sinners will find salvation. God is glorified. The church is edified. The power of the anointing is upon His people and we will do great exploits in the Name of the Lord. Oh, how we need to do some exploits for His Kingdom today. Therefore, let us worship Jesus Christ our Lord!

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