

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **True Worship, Part 8**

Scripture: John 4:20-24

Code: 2011

I'd like you to turn again, if you will, in your Bible to John's gospel, chapter 4, as we come to the last in our series on worship. This is our eighth message, and perhaps of all of the messages this one will be the most profound, I trust.

And I would like to remind you of the text in which we're dealing by reading just verses 23 and 24. Jesus says, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

I have been, as you well know, greatly concerned about the matter of worship. And wondering whether this is unique to my own era, I have for the last week or so, read some more ancient scriptural commentators, some more ancient saints of God, to see if they, too, faced similar periods of time when the church had lost its perspective on worship. And I found that to be the case.

In fact, throughout church history there seemed to be a rather constant cry calling the people of God to a worshiping life. For example, St. Anselm of Canterbury, years ago, said this. "Up, slight man. Flee for a little while thy occupations. Hide thyself for a time from thy disturbing thoughts. Pass away now thy toilsome cares and put aside thy burdensome business. Yield room for some little time with God and rest a little while in Him. In the inner chamber shut out all thoughts save those of God, and such as can aid thee in worshiping Him. Speak now to God, and say, 'I seek Thy face, Thy face, Lord, do I seek.' " And thus did he call his people to worship.

I was reading on the airplane coming back from Dallas on Wednesday The Diary Of Andrew Bonar, a great 19th century saint of God. He wrote down the musings, the thoughts, the lessons the Lord taught him, the impressions he had each day. And I started at the beginning of the book, and I went all the way through the book and read each of his entries written on the Lord's Day, Sunday. Many of them revolved around the theme of worship. One of them that particularly struck me, he wrote on the 26th Lord's Day of 1881. "During the whole day and every service I felt myself strengthened and upheld by the Lord's presence in Spirit, more than usual. There were moments of great nearness."

And I stopped at that point, "moments of great nearness." And I said to myself, "I long to know those kind of moments. Moments in which there's an overwhelming sense of the nearness of God." I wonder whether most Christians ever really experience that? I wonder whether you can reach back

into your memory and find moments of great nearness? Moments when you have drawn nigh unto God and as James 4:8 says, He has in response “drawn nigh unto you.” Moments in which you have sense profoundly the presence of God. Moments when the divine nearness has been like your own hands and feet, your own breath. That intimate.

And all through this series, this has been really the purpose and goal of it, that we might so draw nigh unto God that we are literally overcome by His presence. And I have been preaching to myself before I have been preaching to you, I have been speaking to my own heart. How can I expect that you should have such nearness to God unless I have that? The great desire of my heart is to come forth to speak to you, to preach to you, to teach you, and bearing in that preaching and teaching the very power of God that comes only to those who are in His presence. Because I know what happens in this pulpit will either aid your worship or destroy it.

Richard Foster many years ago said, “Preaching that is without divine power will fall like frost on worship. Heart preaching,” he said, “inflames the spirit to worship. Head preaching smothers the glowing embers.”

And so, I have a great responsibility. I suppose all of us could experience and have preaching that was biblical, where all of the interpretation may have been correct and the Bible was the text. But somehow it was chilling, cold, icy, fell like frost on our worship. And on the other hand, we have all been exposed to that profound power of God that anoints the servant of God and those times when he speaks as if he has come from the very throne room itself. And so, while the series has been directed in many ways to all of you, it has been directed particularly to me.

Now in our look at worship, we’ve tried, of course, not to exhaust the theme, but just to touch, as it were, the edges of it, that the Spirit of God might begin to teach us. And we’ve looked at a definition of worship. We’ve talked about the importance of worship. And we know it’s important because it is God’s priority. He seeks true worshipers, it says in this passage. We’ve talked about the source of worship, and that is salvation. We were redeemed to worship. We’ve talked about the object of worship, and the object is God as Spirit and as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We’ve talked about the sphere of worship. We are to worship everywhere and at all times, and yet uniquely in the assembled presence of God’s redeemed people. And now we are looking at the nature, or the essence, of worship. What it is.

And that’s why I read verses 23 and 24, where it says twice we are to worship “in spirit and in truth.” We are to worship in spirit and in truth, the perfect balance. Not just spirit - that is not just enthusiasm - but truth. Not just truth, but enthusiasm. From the deep part of our soul we worship, we express ourselves based on God’s revealed truth.

And you'll remember that I showed you the Samaritans had the spirit and not the truth, and the Jews had the truth and not the spirit, and so Jesus says, "It isn't here in Gerizim, and it isn't there in Jerusalem. God is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth." And true worship brings both of those together. You cannot have enthusiastic heresy on the one hand, and barren orthodoxy on the other and really worship God. There must be a mingling. You cannot have heat without light, and you can't have light without heat. The two must be in balance.

And remember last time we looked at the concept of spirit. And we said that to worship God in spirit means to worship God from your inner being. It isn't superficial, it isn't external, it isn't formal, it isn't liturgical, it's the heart. And that's what the Psalmist meant in Psalm 103 when he said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name." And what Paul meant in Romans 1:9 when he said, "I worship God in my spirit."

And we suggested to you that there are several necessary elements to worshipping God in spirit. First, spiritual life. We have to be alive spiritually, alive to God. We have to be those who possess the Holy Spirit, which comes by salvation. And to begin with, then, to worship in Spirit, we must have had a transformed inner person and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God.

Secondly, we must focus our thoughts on God. Worship comes out of the heart that is thinking on God.

Thirdly, our thoughts on God are dependent on discovery and meditation out of the Word of God. And as we look at the Word of God, and as we discover its truths and meditate on its truths we find ourselves worshipping.

And then fourthly, we must have an undivided heart, an undivided heart. As I read at the beginning of our worship this morning from Psalm 9, the Psalmist says, "I will praise Thee with my whole heart." I will praise Thee with my whole heart.

To worship in spirit, then, is to have a spirit transformed by regeneration, to think on God, to concentrate all of our faculties on Him and His work. And those thoughts rise from the discovery and the meditation on the Word of God and flow back to God through an undivided heart.

You know, many times in the Old Testament, you can read it in Isaiah. You can read it in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. You can see it in the New Testament in Matthew's gospel. The Lord indicts people for worshipping Him externally while their heart is far from Him. That's a rather common phrase. These people worship Me with their form, but their heart is far from Me. That's the very antithesis of what God desires. He desires the heart to be nigh unto Him.

And that's why, for example, true worship is expressed in very clear terms in Psalm 108, and it goes like this, basically, at the very beginning of the chapter, "O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise." And then in verse 2, "Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise Thee, O Lord, among the people." In other words, the music of praise rises out of a fixed heart, an undivided heart, a settled heart focusing singularly and only on God.

In Psalm 112 we find a Psalm of praise. It begins, "Praise ye the Lord." And it follows along the line of praise. And how is it that the heart can praise? It comes in verse 7, it says, "His heart is fixed." And then in verse 8, "His heart is established." You see, it is a fixed heart and an established heart, totally focusing on the wonder of God out of which arises praise.

In Psalm 57 we find again the same thought. Verse 7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise Thee, O Lord, among the peoples: I will sing unto Thee among the nations. For Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and Thy truth unto the clouds. Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let Thy glory be above all the earth."

You see, again it is a fixed heart, it is a resolute heart, it is a determined heart, a heart focused totally on God. So you begin, then, with a resident Spirit, and a transformed heart, thoughts centered on God, being in the Word of God with discovery and meditation, and then an undivided and fixed heart.

And we ask ourselves the question are we really there when we come to worship the Lord? And there are many times when we may think we are and we're not, and that's where Psalm 139 comes in. I think it's most interesting. You know the verse. Just listen to it. Psalm 139:23-24 says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Now David says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart. And if you find anything, deal with it." And that is an admission that even David couldn't fully understand his own heart. He may have felt that he dealt with everything, and so he says, "God, there may be some things that I don't see." And it may be that in our hearts and in our lives the reason we have difficulty really abandoning ourselves in worship to God, the reason we don't experience the nearness of God that we would like to experience is because we have areas of our life that are not dealt with and maybe areas that we are blind to and only God knows. And so as we approach this matter of worship to have an undivided heart, we must come with an open and repentant spirit. That would be the fifth in those elements of true worship in the spirit.

There must be an openness. There must be a willingness to say, "God, turn on the searchlight and whatever you find in the corner, expose it." And if you have found it very difficult to worship, if you come here and go home and there's little change in your life, and there's little sense of the nearness

of God, there's little sense of entering into divine presence, it may well be that there are areas in your life which you have long overlooked that only God knows about, and you must plead with Him to search them out and expose them and willingly confess them in a broken and a contrite spirit.

You see, those things must be dealt with. Every time in the Scripture we talk about worship we must talk about cleansing, purging, purifying, confessing, repenting, because the only person who can utterly and fully enter into communion with an utterly holy God is one whose sin is utterly dealt with. And we don't want to go rushing into God's presence in our impurity, thinking that all is well. We, like Isaiah, must confess before God our sin and allow God to touch that living, burning coal to our lips, if need be, to purge us.

And so we worship in spirit. When the Spirit of God resides within us and when we are willing to follow our thought line so it's consumed by God, when we're in His Word discovering, meditating, an undivided heart to which we have given God full access to uncover anything that stands between us and Him. That is worshiping in spirit.

Now Charnock wrote many years ago these words. "Without the heart it is no worship; it is a stage play. It is an acting a part without being that person really. It is playing the hypocrite." Listen to this. "We may truly be said to worship God though we lack perfection, but we cannot be said to worship God if we lack sincerity."

That's very true. We may worship imperfectly, but we cannot worship insincerely. And so as we come to worship God, it must be from the depth of what is within us, a sincere worship of God. So we yield our spirits to the Holy Spirit, who fills us with His presence and power. We ask Him to cleanse out every corner of our lives and then the flow of worship can occur. Nothing superficial about it.

Now let's look at the second and balancing element. We worship in truth. We worship in truth. And we touched on it last time in our discussion of the idea of discovery and meditation on the Word. But let me just expand it, if I might. All worship is in response to truth. All worship is in response to truth. There is no worship that is not linked inseparably to truth. Worship is not an emotional exercise with God-words, inducing feelings. Worship is a response built upon truth.

Now Pilate asked the very important question, "What is truth?" And Jesus answered it in John 17:17 when He said, "Thy word is truth." Or Psalm 119, "The testimonies of the Lord are true."

Now if we are to worship in truth, and the Word of God is truth, then we must worship out of an understanding of the Word of God. If we're going to worship God truly, we must understand who He is, and the only place He revealed Himself is in His Word.

In Romans 1:18 it tells us that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth.” Now there is the truth in terms of conscience, the truth in terms of what is called “general revelation.” And then verse 19, “That which may be known of God is manifest in them.”

God, first of all, disclosed Himself in general terms in conscience and in creation. And men hold that truth about God. But verse 25 says, “They exchanged the truth about God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator.” Now, God’s whole purpose was to reveal Himself. He revealed Himself, first of all, in creation and conscience, and then He revealed Himself crystal clear in the pages of the Word of God. If we are to worship in truth, then we are to worship truly as God is to be worshiped.

And the only place we’ll find God truly defined is in the Bible. It is the Bible that explains the God of creation and the God of conscience. Everything we know about God is in the Word of God. And to worship in truth, then, means to worship from out of an understanding of the Word of God. You cannot worship God in a vacuum. You cannot worship God apart from His revelation.

An illustration of this comes to mind in the eighth chapter of Nehemiah, where it tells us that “Ezra opened the book in sight of all the people,” that is the Word of God, and he opened it up standing “above the people” on a platform and immediately “all the people stood up” at the presentation of God’s Word. “And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.” The Word of God, just its very holy presence, threw them all to their knees in an act of worship.

All worship, listen now, is in response to truth about God. And all truth about God is revealed in His Word. If we are called to worship God, then we want to worship God as God is. If we want to know how He is, we have to look at His self revelation. The Bible discloses the truth about God, which guides our worship.

And truth is the objective factor in worship as spirit is the subjective. But both must come together. In Psalm 47:7 there’s a very interesting statement. It says, “Sing ye praises with understanding.” Sing ye praises with understanding. All worship must be based on truth. Worship is not simply holding hands and swaying back and forth, or having ecstatic experiences, having experiences that have no meaning or no content. That is not worship. Worship is not even a good feeling, as good as good feelings are.

Worship is an expression of praise from the depth of the heart toward a God who is understood as He is truly revealed. “Sing ye praises with understanding.” There’s no virtue in saying you’re worshiping God in something which you don’t, nor does anybody else, comprehend. There’s no true worship

apart from a true understanding of God. Any group that does not understand truth about God does not worship God, cannot worship God, for He is worshiped in spirit and according to truth.

In 2 Corinthians 4:2 Paul says “we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty - ” we don’t do things that manipulate “ - and we don’t walk in craftiness, we don’t handle the Word of God deceitfully; - ” in other words, we don’t use it to induce certain experiences, or certain results or responses “ - but by manifestation of the truth we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Paul says, “I will never use the Bible. I will never deceive anybody. I will never try to be dishonest with anybody to gain my own ends. All I desire to do is to manifest the truth, and therefore to commend myself in the sight of God.” All response in worship is a response to the Word of God.

And it’s amazing how many people don’t understand this. As I mentioned some time earlier, people very often ask me, “How can you have a worship service when you preach such a long time? When do your people have time to worship?” And the answer is you cannot worship God apart from an understanding of who He is. That’s why I’m so committed to expository preaching. That’s why I’m so committed to the systematic teaching of the Word of God, week in, week out. There is no other thing to do.

I could give you clever sermons that would move your emotions, and they would move your attitudes, and I could maybe make you cry by filling in a whole lot of stories and other things. I could make it interesting, and fun, and exciting. But when it was all said and done you might say, “Boy, John MacArthur can preach,” but you wouldn’t worship God. It is a far greater challenge for me to teach the Word of God and let it commend you to respond to God as God is revealed in this, His self-revelation.

That’s why I think that any young person going into the ministry who is not committed to expository preaching is cutting his own throat, ultimately. Because people must respond in life at every dimension to the truth of the Word of God. We have to worship in truth. And truth is revealed in this Word. And that’s our source. And that’s why I’m so totally committed to the fact that we must teach the Word of God.

When the early church met together, they met to discuss the apostle’s doctrine, to be taught the apostle’s doctrine, the teachings of the apostles. What were they? They were the revelations of God about Himself, the self disclosure of God made manifest through their writings and their teachings. And they were the substance of the truth on which those people worshiped. That’s why Paul said to Timothy, “Until I come, read the text, explain the text, and apply the text. Stay in the text. Teach sound doctrine.” What’s that? Truth about God.

We’re not here to create an emotional experience. We’re here to teach you about God out of this book, and out of that foundation of knowledge comes worship.

You know, if you want to see an illustration of this, look at 1 Corinthians 14, and this might serve as a good illustration. People in the Corinthian church had pretty well flipped out to the extreme of enthusiastic content-less activity. I mean, they were going through all kinds of ecstatic gibberish and the rather upfront, showy kind of demonstrations that had come out of their pagan background had been dragged into the church, and they were setting content and truth aside for the sake of their ecstasies, and they were unintelligible, non-understandable, emotional experiences.

And Paul indicts them in verse 14 by saying, "If I pray in a tongue - " or language " - my spirit prays but my understanding is unfruitful." And that's to limp because God wants to be worshiped not only "in spirit but in - " what? " - in truth." And an unfruitful understanding is not what God wants. And so he says, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: - " and when I sing " - I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." I mean, because people must understand what they see, it says in verse 16.

Now go to verse 23. And he says, as an illustration, "If the whole church comes together to one place, and everybody speaks these unintelligible languages, and somebody comes in who is unlearned, and unbelieving, they're going to say you're mad." The result is they're going to just say these people are out of their minds. "But if you preach - " and that's what "prophecy" means, "to speak forth," " - if you preach - " the Word of God " - and one comes in who believes not, or is unlearned, he will be convicted and judged. And the secrets of his heart will be made manifest; and he will fall down on his face and worship God."

You see, the effect of a purely emotional thing is that people get a good feeling. The effect of the truth is that they worship God. And don't ever confuse an ecstatic feeling with worshiping God. Truth is at the heart of worship. We're not denying the enthusiasm and the feeling, it just must be inseparably linked to the truth. It has to be.

In the early church they worshiped, and they used songs, and they used hymns, and they used spiritual songs, they made melodies. They had times of praise and times of thanks. And all of those are listed in Colossians 3:16-17. But it says in 16 before that, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you - " plousis abundantly, fully, " - richly." So that when the Word dominates you, then your praise is regulated, and your worship is conformed to the divine standard.

So the nature of worship, the essence of worship, what is it? It's to offer God worship from depths of our inner being in praise, and prayer, and song, and giving, and living, but always based upon His revealed truth. And it's so difficult to keep the church conformed to that because the church tends on the one hand to get cold, and lifeless, and dead, and icy; and on the other hand to get emotional, and fanatical, and feeling-oriented; and there must be a balance. And we who tend to be on the icy, unemotional end get intimidated by the feelers over there, don't we? But that's not where it belongs



either. It's both in balance. We must know the truth.

You know, when Paul went to Mars Hill in Athens in chapter 17 of Acts. But their worship was unacceptable, and his indictment is most telling, most telling. He says a very simple thing to them, just listen, verse 23. "As I passed by, and behold your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye worship in ignorance." There was the indictment. "You worship in an ignorance." And that's unacceptable. You cannot worship God in ignorance.

And may I say that even on the cold and sort of orthodox end, where ritual, and formality, and routine, and tradition has become a mindless, meaningless activity, there's just as much a loss of true worship as in the ecstasies of the other extreme. And so I submit to you that if you're going to worship God, there must be faithful commitment to the Word of God. It isn't going to happen by some zap out of heaven. You worship as the overflow of your understanding of God's self-revelation. And it's here in this book.

And if you're running around waiting to get zapped with some thunderbolt out of the blue, and fall into some glorious ecstasy and worship God, it is not going to happen legitimately. As you study the Word of God, and discover its truths, and meditate on its truths, and focus on God, and have an undivided heart, and a repentant heart that's pure and clean, you're going to find the flow out of that heart as one of worship.

Over and over in the New Testament you read this phrase, "Brethren, I would not have you to be - " what? " - ignorant." There's no premium in the Bible on ignorance. "Be diligent to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Truth, truth, truth. And so we have been given the command to "worship in spirit and in truth."

Now, I trust and pray that the Spirit of God will tie those things deep within us. The essence of worship, so simple and yet so profound in its perfect balance, can only be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. But you must come along with a willingness to dig into the Word of God so that your worship will be a flowing over of that discovery and meditation.

Now the results of worship, the results. We know we are to worship because we've been commanded to do that. But all of us are result-oriented and we naturally ask the question if we really begin to worship what will happen? And I believe this will happen in our lives and in our church. What are the results of worship? And they're so simple and yet so far reaching.

Number one, God will be glorified. God will be glorified. You see, He will be glorified when He is worshiped. Psalm 50:23, "Who so offereth praise glorifieth Me." When we praise God, when we worship God, He is glorified. In Leviticus 10:3 He says, "I will be sanctified in them that come near

Me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” God wants to be set apart, and as we come to Him He is glorified among His people. The supreme purpose of life is to glorify God. And if that’s all there was that would be enough. When we worship, beloved, when we worship God as God is to be worshiped, He is glorified. And that’s the reason we exist. That’s enough, that God should be glorified.

But secondly, I believe that when we worship God as He desires to be worshiped, Christians are purified. Christians are purified. There’s no question about it in my mind. When you approach God to worship God, immediately you are faced with this reality - Psalm 24 - that He that cometh into My presence must come with “clean hands, and a - ” what? “ - pure heart.” So that a worshiping church is a pure church. It demands that.

As we enter into God’s presence, there is a recognition of our sinfulness and there is a willingness to abandon that sinfulness. There is a consuming desire to be pure, and to be clean. The closer we draw to God, the nearer we come to God, the more overwhelmed we become with our sinfulness and cry with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart. See if there be any wicked way in me.”

And so, I believe that God is glorified in worship. And that’s enough. I also believe Christians are purified. And I believe that the key to the sanctity of the church is the worship of the church. That’s why you need to be here. In worshipping God in the assembly of His redeemed people, as you are drawn into the presence of God by the music, and by the message of the Word of God, and the truth that you hear, as you are drawn into His presence, there is an immediate facing of the reality of your sinfulness.

That’s the reason the Lord’s Table is so very, very important. And that’s the reason the early church so frequently engaged in the Lord’s Table, even daily. And maybe reason enough for you in your family, in your fellowship groups, to come to the Lord’s Table that you might come face to face with the need to be pure.

Thirdly, I believe where true worship occurs, not only is God glorified and Christians purified, but the church is edified. The church is edified. The church is built up. The church is transformed.

You know, you read the book of Acts, and it’s so marvelous that when the church was worshiping, they found favor with God, they found favor with everybody. And the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved. They filled the city with their doctrine. They turned the world upside down. They were winsome. They were attractive. They were dynamic. I believe that a worshiping church is a church that is built up. And may I hasten to add this, please? By “edified” I don’t mean we feel better, I mean we live better. We live better. That’s the issue. We live better. The Lord purges, purifies, builds up the church.

And it says in 1 Corinthians 14:26, "Let everything be done to edifying." Let everything be done to build the church. A church is built up in its worship. As you come together to worship the Lord, you become strong, you become transformed. Let me just say this another way. Worship changes people, true worship. And if you have come a long time and you're unchanged, then you're not really worshipping. If worship does not change us, it has not been worship. I mean, when you draw nigh into the presence of God, there must be change. You can't come back the same any more than Paul could when he was caught into the third heaven. You can't.

If worship does not propel us into greater obedience, call it what we will, it isn't worship. It isn't worship unless we come out of it with a greater commitment to obedience. As worship begins in holy expectancy, it ends in holy obedience or it isn't worship. It can't be. It has to change us.

In Exodus 33:11 it says this incredible statement. "And the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Now there's worship. Moses and God, face to face. I mean, in that same chapter God lets His glory pass before Moses and sees a glimpse of the Shekinah of God. I mean, they're close. They're close.

And you know what happens out of a face to face intimacy with God? I'll tell you what happens. Worship does. 34:8, "And Moses went fast, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." I mean, that is the response to intimacy with God, worship. And then you know his next response was? Verse 9. He said, "If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin."

And there we see again the same thing, don't we? Face to face with God, in the intimacy of worship, he is immediately overwhelmed with his own what? Sin, and the sin of his people. And there's a broken and contrite heart. And immediately God responds so wonderfully in verse 10 and says, "I'll make you a promise: before all the people I will do marvels, as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among whom thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is an awe-inspiring thing that I will do with thee." God says, "Moses, I'm going to bless you. I'm going to do things through your life that are awesome."

You should start out face to face with the living God. And in that face-to-face confrontation, you bow in worship, overwhelmed by your sin, and God's response is forgiveness and restoration, and the covenant of promise to bless you and to pour His awesomeness through you. And the result is you're changed.

Chapter 34, later in verse 29 says when Moses came down the mountain, "his face shone." His face was so brilliantly lit that he was unrecognizable. He was so different that he wasn't the man he was when he went up there. And that's worship. Worship transforms people. Holy intimacy face to face,

you come here and you come face to face with God, or you get in your closet at home and your time in the Word, and you come face to face with God, and you see God, and you're forced to fall if your vision is clear, and if your heart is undivided, and if you're meditating, and discovering, and focusing, and if the Spirit of God is in your life working on you, you'll be brought to your knees, and you'll be seeing your sin, and you'll cry out to God for cleansing for that which you can see, and for what you can't see you'll say, "Search me and know my heart." And out of that kind of confession of sin, God will give you sweet promises of His power to flow through you, and you'll come out of that place of worship a transformed person. Has to be. I mean, you cannot be with God and come out and not have your face shine.

And so, the result is not only that God is glorified, Christians are purified, but the church is edified. Not better feelings, better living.

There's a fourth result. The lost are evangelized. The lost are evangelized. The profound testimony of a worshiping community has a greater impact probably than any single sermon does. Did you hear that? Has a greater impact than any single sermon.

I'll never forget the Jewish lady who went down to the temple down the street to get counsel. Her marriage was breaking up. And they told her if she didn't pay - hadn't paid her dues - and so they couldn't counsel her until she paid up her dues. And she was very upset. And she came out. And it happened to be on a Sunday, and she got on to the sidewalk, and got caught in the crowd, and wound up in Grace Church during the worship service.

I baptized her a few weeks after that. And she said, "I don't remember anything you said. In fact, I couldn't even tell you what the sermon was about. But," she says, "I was absolutely in awe of the joy, and the peace, and the love that was going on among the people as they worshiped. I had never seen anything to come close to that." As a result she became a Christian, just seeing the worshiping people.

And this has happened again and again, and it is really the first attraction. Many of you folks that are here perhaps visiting for the first time, are more curious about what's going on out there than you are about what's going on up here. And you have a right to be. I believe that where there's a worshiping group of people who lift their hearts to God and know His infinite blessing, and whose faces shine because they're in His presence, there is going to be an impact that's utterly devastating on the world.

In 1 Corinthians he says, "If you shape your worship up - " I read it to you earlier, 14:23 and 25. "If you'll just get your worship shaped up, and do it the way it ought to be done, the unbelievers are going to come in there, and they're going to fall on their face and worship God." Great impact on the lost through a worshiping people.

The results of worship: God is glorified, Christians are purified, the church is edified, and the lost are evangelized.

Now, I want to give you a test right here. And I want you to stay with it. Don't leave me for the next ten minutes. This is the crux of pulling it all together. Some of you are saying to yourself, "John, I understand worship now. I understand the importance of it. God seeks worshipers. I understand the source of it, my salvation. I understand the object is God. I understand the sphere is everywhere and at all times, especially in the corporate assembly of the redeemed people. I understand the essence of worship. It must be perfectly balanced between spirit and truth, the Word of God and the heart. And I'm ready. And you've got me slammed against the wall now. What do I do? How do I really prepare myself to worship?"

You're going to get up on Sunday. You're going to come here. What are you going to do? How are you going to prepare yourself to worship? How can it happen? One verse can be your text. You ought to write this verse in the front of your Bible, and these four little points I'm going to give you, and use it as a worship preparation.

Hebrews 10:22. To me it is the greatest summation of preparation. The issue here, people - listen now - the issue when you come here to worship is not how well prepared the choir is. The issue is not how well prepared the preacher is. The issue is how well prepared are you to worship God? Now begin with verse 22, it says, "Let us draw near," and you can stop there.

This is a call to worship. Draw near. To whom? To God. Come on, it's time to worship. Let's draw near. Let's move toward God. You say, "That's what I want to do, John. I understand it now. I see it. I want to draw near." But there are some conditions, four checkpoints.

First one, "with a true heart." I call that "sincerity." That's the first test, sincerity. Are you really sincere? Is your heart fixed? Are you worshipping with your whole heart? Are you praying with David, "Unite my heart, O Lord"? Are you really sincere and undivided?

Second, "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Now that's what I call "fidelity." You see, he's writing to the Hebrews, and they were very use to the Old Testament. They were very use to the old covenant. The new covenant had come, the New Testament had come. The new revelation in Jesus Christ, the mysteries were unfolding. And in order for them to worship God, they had to say no to the old covenant, right? No more ceremonies, no more sacrifices, no more symbols, pictures, types, and the old was gone. It was set aside. It was over.

A new and better covenant had come, and they had to be willing to say, "I am coming to God in full confidence of the revealed faith in the New Testament. In full assurance that it isn't a works system. It

isn't a ceremony system. It is that which is revealed in the faith of the new covenant." You have to come fully by faith in that revealed in Jesus Christ. That's fidelity.

So, you worship not only with sincerity, but you worship according to the truth. That's what "fidelity" means. The truth revealed in the New Testament, in full assurance that it is saving truth, that you don't have to hang on to any of your own works, any of your own worthiness, any of your own self-righteousness, any of your own rituals. You're fully assured that you can come to God simply and only through faith as revealed in the new covenant.

Thirdly, "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." This is humility. You come to God knowing you have no business being there because your heart is filled with an evil conscience and you've got to be sprinkled from that. And it was the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross that took care of our sin.

So you come to God knowing that you're unworthy, and that in order to even be there, you had to have your evil heart cleansed. That's humility. So as we worship, there's a sense of unworthiness, a sense of the cross making provision for our sin. Knowing, Lord, I have no business being here except that You washed me. You sprinkled me clean from the evil that was in me.

And so, to worship God, you must pass the test of sincerity. You must pass the test of fidelity. You must come strictly and only on the terms that God's revealed in the new covenant, with none of your own goodness, and none of your own worth at all. You come strictly by faith in full assurance that that's all that's needed. Thirdly, you come knowing you have no right to be there, that's humility, and you're there only because you've been washed.

And fourthly, "And our bodies washed with pure water." I call this one "purity." Sincerity, fidelity, humility, and purity, and this is not the same as the prior one. This is that daily washing, you know? This is where before you come to worship, you've got to deal with the sin in your life: sin confessed, sin purged. Yes, your heart has been cleansed at the cross. But your feet picked up the dust of the world, didn't they? And there must be a confession of sin.

Every time you worship, beloved, I suggest that this is the test you have to go through. Am I sincere? Is my heart fixed? Is my whole heart devoted to God? Am I focusing on Him? Am I seeing Him in the Word in discovery and meditation, so that my hungering desire in totality is to draw nigh unto Him? Am I assured that I can come simply and only on faith, and have the full assurance that it is sufficient as revealed in the new covenant? That we are saved by faith and we have a new and living way by faith?

And am I coming knowing that I have no reason to be there except for Christ? Coming in humility. And am I coming in purity, having dealt with any sin in my life? I dare say that if you would just take

an extra little time in the morning on the Lord's Day, and open your Bible to that verse, and just check your way through, you would do more to prepare your heart for worship than any other thing I know. "And then you can come unto Me," He says, "by the new and living way, through Jesus Christ."

Are you sincere? Are you committed to the truth of the new covenant? Are you placing all of your right to access on the finished work of Christ? And are you pure, having dealt with the sin in your life? If you are, you can say, "Let us draw nigh unto God and He will - " what? " - draw nigh unto us."

Now all this will work in your life. All this will change your life. I believe that. Unless you're hindered. And I want to close with this, and listen very carefully. Some of you have been coming to church for years but you've never really drawn nigh unto God. You don't have the sense of the nearness of God. Even in your life, in your own private devotion and prayer, and so forth, you don't have it in it. Maybe that there are some things you need to do to prepare your heart for worship.

There are all kinds of worship modes, but I'm going to suggest three barriers that will prevent this from working in your life, and this is where I'm going to finish. And I want you to listen very carefully.

You've got to start somewhere, and you can't just Walk in here, and open your mouth, and let the praise pour out if you've got some things in your life you haven't dealt with. The first one is what I'll call "the worship of repentance," the worship of repentance. If there is sin in your life that's not been dealt with, you've got to deal with it. And you've got to accept the responsibility for it and confess it.

In 2 Samuel 12, we find David. David had sinned a great sin. Oh, what a great sin. He'd sinned with Bathsheba, committed adultery, and then had her husband murdered. And then David, who had sinned so greatly against God, saw the little child born of that union dying and he knew God was punishing him. And this is what he said. This is what the Scripture says. "David arose from the earth, washed, anointed himself, changed his clothes, came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped."

You know what that is? That is the worship of repentance. You say, "What do you mean by that?" I mean that here he was in the midst of the saddest tragic situation, the loss of his little baby son, and yet he worshiped God because he knew he was receiving what he deserved. In the midst of his chastening, he worshiped. In repentance the soul says, "I have sinned and I deserve these calamities. I have erred against the truth. And I have, most of all, sinned against God." The worship of repentance means that right in the midst of chastening, you pour out your heart to God, and you confess your sin, and you say I'm getting what I deserve.

Some of you can't get the praise part because you've never dealt with your sin, you've never poured out your heart in repentance to God. You may even be angry or bitter over some of the things that you've been chastened by. It's going to have to start for some of you with the worship of repentance over your sin. David did. It says he "went into the house of the Lord, and worshipped." He could

worship God even while God was smiting him, so committed was he to worship.

Secondly, I call this “the worship of acceptance,” the worship of acceptance. In the familiar words of Job, when Job heard the news that everything he loved was gone: his possessions, his animals, his children, all gone. You know what the Bible says? “Job arose, rent his clothes, shaved his head, fell down on the ground - ” and listen to this “ - and worshipped.” Did you think he might have cursed God? He just lost everything: all of his children, all of his crops, his animals, everything. And he worshiped. I call that “the worship of acceptance.”

He hadn't sinned like David. God was just doing this for His own purposes. And Job said, “Look, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away - ” what? “ - blessed be the name of the Lord.” That is the worship of an unquestioning acceptance. And some of you people have never been able to worship God because you're still unable to accept some circumstances God has brought into your life, and they've made you bitter, and you can't worship. And until you get to the point of acceptance, you're never going to be able to worship God.

You see, George Mueller put it this way. He said, “There came a day when I died. I died to the praise and the criticism of men. I died to everything but the will of God.” And may I suggest that that was the day he began to live?

Job said, “He knoweth the way that I take, and when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” It's the worship of acceptance. To be willing to accept your circumstances, to be willing to accept your place in life, your job, your career, your partner, your children, your whole circumstance, and say, “God, You knew all of this;” the loss of your loved one, the loss of your child, the loss of your job, the pain of illness, and say, “I can worship You in the midst of it all.”

You see, sin will hold you from worship, and so will bitterness, and an inability to accept what God has brought. And keep in mind that when God does bring those things into your life He has a purpose, doesn't He?

I was reading a verse that just fascinated me, in the 48th chapter of Jeremiah. You don't need to turn to it. I just want to comment on it very briefly. In Jeremiah 48:11 it says this - God's about to judge Moab - it says, this is why, “Moab hath been at ease from his youth.” In other words, he'd invariably get into trouble when you don't have problems because you don't really grow. Has had it so easy and so smooth, “that he hath settled on his dregs, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.”

Now I read that and I thought, “That's a very obscure statement.” “Moab has settled in his dregs, has not been poured from vessel to vessel, and therefore the scent is in him.” What in the world is that



talking about? You know what it's talking about? It's talking about making wine. And what they did was they had a container, and they put the grapes that were prepared for the wine in there, and they let them sit for a while. And eventually the bitterness and the sediment would fall out of it and settle into the bottom, and that's what we call "the dregs."

And then after a while, when that had done, they would pour it into another vessel, and the remaining bitterness would settle into the bottom in sediment called "dregs" again. And then they would pour to another container, and another vessel, and another, and another, and another, and over a period of a long time, just keep pouring it from vessel to vessel to vessel to vessel to vessel, till finally all of that sediment would be in the bottle, all of that bitterness would - in the bottom, rather - all of that bitterness would be gone, and the wine coming out of that final vessel would have the aroma of sweetness that the winemaker wanted it to have.

And you know what the prophet is saying about Moab? You see, Moab has never lost its bitterness. It's never been poured from difficult situation to difficult situation, where the bitterness has been taken out. By the way, the dregs in the bottom of all those containers are what vinegar is made of, because of its bitterness.

Listen, you're better off in life if God pours you from vessel to vessel to vessel to vessel to vessel, and each time you're poured into a different trial, each time you're confined in a different circumstance, a little of the bitterness of life is gone. And finally, one day He'll pour you out of that last vessel and all that will be there is the sweet aroma that He was after all the time, and the bitter scent will be gone. And the sooner you learn the worship of acceptance, the freer you're going to be to lift your heart in praise to God. Paul said, "The last drops of my life are poured out as a sweet savor to God." He'd gone from vessel to vessel to vessel.

And then lastly, the worship of devotion, or commitment. And it just hits me that in Genesis 22, Abraham went up to Mount Moriah and he had Isaac. And this is so amazing. God had said, "You go up there and you slay Isaac. You kill him as an offering." And you know what it says in Genesis 22? "Abraham came to the place that the Lord had spoken to him of, and Abraham said to his young men -" the ones traveling with him " - Abide ye here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship." Incredible. To me that's incredible. The fact that he could see that as worship to God, when it was going to take the life of his own son. You see, that's devoting yourself to worship no matter what the cost is. You see?

I mean, seeing beyond the pain, seeing beyond the difficulty. Some people can't worship God because they can't bother to get out of bed. How far is that from being willing to stick a knife in the chest of your own beloved son? And calling it worship, if that's what God said?

“Let’s go,” he says, “and worship.” He didn’t use the word “sacrifice.” Why? He saw past that. He saw beyond that. He saw beyond the giving and the offering. He saw beyond the price and the cost to the worship.

Some people, as I say, can’t come here and be free to worship because they’ve got to start with the worship of repentance, or the worship of acceptance, or the worship of devotion. And they’re not willing to deal with their sin. They’re not willing to deal with their circumstances, and they’re not willing to pay the price. But, may I suggest to you that if you worship, you’ll receive the promise of God that through your life He’ll pour His awesomeness. I close with this.

A.W. Tozer asked an interesting question, he said this. “Are we losing our oh? - ” Are we losing our oh? “When the heart on its knees moves into the awesome presence and hears with fear and wonder things not lawful to utter. The mind falls flat and words previously its faithful servants become weak and totally incapable of telling what the heart hears and sees. In that awful moment the worshiper can only cry, ‘Oh!’ ” Are we losing our oh? I pray not.

Father, thank You for our time this morning. We pray that You will meet us at our need, make us true worshipers, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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