

**Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Worship, Part 4**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-135

And again tonight as we turn to the Word of God in our time of worship we come back to the theme of this morning. I have really enjoyed preaching on the same subject on Sundays, on the Lord's day. Staying in the same kind of theme is exciting for me and refreshing and gives us so much continuity. And I get to sort of say at night what I haven't gotten to say in the morning so I don't have to wait so long. Usually I have to wait a week because we do two different series, one in the morning and one in the evening, but this has been a special joy for me.

For those of you who aren't kind of up to speed with us, we're doing a series on the anatomy of the church, talking about what the church is like, doing a little bit of physiology on the church, sort of spiritualized physiology. The Bible talks about the church as the body of Christ and so we've extended that body metaphor to embrace a bit more detail.

And as we look at the body of Christ, our first category of discussion had to do with the skeleton, those things that are key to the shape and the form and the rigidity, sort of the basic bottom-line foundational elements of the life of the church. And then we moved to a second category called the internal systems. And as we've looked at the internal systems of the church as a body, those organs that make the church alive, that carry its life, we've been considering many different spiritual attitudes. Spiritual attitudes are those things that convey, carry the life of the church. And we are looking at one of those which is obviously very, very important and that is the attitude of worship. And we've been saying over last Sunday and then this morning that it is foundational life in the church that we be worshipers. We've talked about the need for faith and obedience and love and humility and contentment and gratitude and forgiveness and strength, and a number of those kinds of things that are essential to life in the church. None is more important than this matter of worship.

And our text for this particular discussion has been John chapter 4, although we've launched around into different places. Let's go back to John chapter 4 tonight as we begin our time and I want to continue to talk about this matter of worship. We have talked about the source of worship and we have identified God as the source of worship, and then we talk about the object of worship, and we identified God as the object of worship, God who is spirit and God who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we noted this morning.

Now remember our context. John 4, Jesus is having a conversation with a woman, a Samaritan woman by the well there near her village of Sychar. And they're having a discussion about eternal life

and Jesus is telling her that He can bring to her eternal life and she wants that eternal life but must come to grips with her sin in order to come and receive eternal life. As we heard again from the baptism, there must be repentance, an acknowledgement of sin, and when that doesn't exist a true salvation doesn't take place...as we heard illustrated repeatedly tonight. This woman is willing to acknowledge her sin and she wants to bow before God in penitence and faith. She wants to worship God. And so she asks Jesus to explain to her about worship, and thus Jesus in verse 21 launches in to a discussion of worship that runs down to verse 24.

And in this discussion He presents to her the source of worship who is God the Father who...as verse 23 says...seeks people to be His worshipers. We are worshipers because God has sought us. It is the unfolding of His redemptive purpose from eternity past.

Then we talked about the object of worship and we noted that Jesus speaking about worship says you shall worship the Father, and down in verse 24, God is spirit and you shall worship Him. So we said that we then worship God who is spirit, and that sums up all of His attributes, and God who is the Father in the sense not that He's the Father of all people by creation or the Father of Israel by choice, but that He's the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is God is the one who is incarnate in Christ. And if you're coming to God but not acknowledging Him as the God who incarnated in Jesus Christ, then you are not worshiping the true and living God of Scripture.

Now thirdly I want us to come tonight to a discussion of the nature of worship because in these brief verses worship is outlined for us as to its character, or as to its nature. Let's go back to the text.

In verse 22 Jesus says, "You worship that which you do not know." That's a problem. Ignorant worship is a problem. You need to know who it is that you're worshiping and for what. But He says to this Samaritan woman, "You worship that which you do not know." It was characteristic of Samaritan worship to be ignorant. On the other hand, He says in verse 22, "We...being Jews...worship that which we know for salvation is from the Jews." Through the Jews, it's not just for the Jews, but it is from the Jews. It was Jews whom God chose in Abraham to be His people to receive the law and the covenants and the adoption and the promises, all of it came through them.

And so, He is saying...You Samaritans are ignorant because you have not the fullness of God's revelation...we Jews have been the repository of the revelation of God, so you worship with a measure of ignorance but we worship that which we know. "But an hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth." And this is a very interesting little dialogue here. He is saying, in effect, that Samaritans worship in spirit without truth. In other words, you're up there on Mount Gerizim and they had a very lively worship and I understand through history that it remained that way and even today the few Samaritans who still worship on Mount Gerizim have a very animated, almost ecstatic kind of worship. It is full of the...of the buoyancy of human spirit, is alive almost electric kind of worship but it is devoid of revealed truth.

On the other hand, the worship of the Jews was based upon the revelation of God but lacked heart and lacked spirit and lacked that inner devotion that caused the excitement and enthusiasm that characterized the Samaritans. And so Jesus says, "The Father wants to bring both together and He is seeking those true worshipers who worship Him in spirit and truth, for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." And there we have the nature of worship. It is related to spirit and it is related to truth. Very important to understand this.

Now let's go back to the setting a little bit just to open it up. Jerusalem had truth but not spirit. There's was a barren orthodoxy. There was a cold diffident sort of pedantic ceremonial ritualistic approach to the whole thing that lacked heart. On the other hand, Samaritans on Mount Gerizim had the spirit but not the truth. You had barren orthodoxy among the Jews and you had enthusiastic heresy among the Samaritans. He says you worship you know not what. They were aggressive, no one could fault their aggression. They were excited about their worship. Their temple, by the way, and they built one on Gerizim, had long before this been destroyed. It was destroyed in 128 B.C. but they had maintained their worship even without their temple. And they were zealous. And to this day I think there are only about a hundred Samaritans still left, and they're still up there on Mount Gerizim. If you ever travel in Israel you're unlikely to go there because it is a very intense area occupied by Arab terrorists, but Mount Gerizim is not far from the city of Nablus if you ever look at a map. But they really didn't know what they were worshiping. They rejected all of the Old Testament except the Pentateuch. And that is to say everything after Deuteronomy they rejected. All of the holy writings that encompassed the prophets and history and poetry they rejected.

And so, with just the Pentateuch they had a great amount of ignorance. There was much that they could know but much that they could not know. And so we say they were enthusiastic heretics, sincere, earnest, devout and ignorant. However, even the Pentateuch...and mark this in your mind...even the Pentateuch, if all you had was the first five books of the Old Testament, would give them enough information to anticipate a Messiah. That's right. There would be enough in the Pentateuch, there is enough, to anticipate the ultimate Messiah, the one who would bruise the serpent's head, the one who would be born from the woman, the one who would be the prophet like unto Moses, that prophet, the one who would carry the scepter as Genesis 49 talks about, the one who would be the ultimate sacrificial lamb. And there was enough in the Pentateuch to anticipate a Messiah and consequently if you go down to verse 29, the woman goes back to town after the conversation and she says to the men of the city, "Come see a man who told me all the things that I have done, this is not the Christ, is it?"

Now that indicates to us that they had some anticipation of the coming of Messiah...anticipating that the Messiah would come. And this woman goes back to ask the men who no doubt were the ones discussing theology if in fact this one might be that Messiah. So they had ignorance, but they also

had some information. And as I said this morning, their worship was monotheistic, that it was...that is it was focused on the one true God.

Now let's talk about the Jews for a moment, going back to verse 22. "We worship that which we know for salvation is of the Jews." They knew the truth because they accepted the whole revelation of the Old Testament all the way from Genesis to Malachi. But they lacked the heart. They were hypocrites, coldly hypocritical, externalists, legalists, going through the motions. Their whole religion was really a sham. And that's why when Jesus arrived He cleansed the temple. He attacked at the very heart of their false religion. And when Jesus preached His first great sermon that we know as the Sermon on the Mount, He made an all out theological assault on their false religion. In the middle of the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 6, He says to them in verse 1, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." And then He indicts them for going to offer alms not for God's sake but simply to parade themselves in front of the people. And then He indicts them for praying not that they might be heard by God but that as hypocrites they might stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners in order to be seen by men. They were hypocrites and theirs was a cold, dead, legalistic externalism without any heart. In fact, they were so heartless that they killed the Messiah.

You'll notice down in verse 40 and 41 as the story goes along between this woman and Jesus, it says in verse 39 that from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified He told me all the things that I have done. When the woman said the man is a prophet, the man knows my mind and can tell me things I haven't even told Him, that was enough to convince them that He was from God and they believed in Him. And when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them and He stayed there two days and many more believed because of His word. So the Samaritan woman and many in her village believed.

So on the one hand you can say they lacked knowledge, and yet they had enough to believe in a Messiah and when the true Messiah came they believed in Him. There was still much they didn't know. The Jews, on the other hand, had all the revelation and when the Messiah came they executed Him.

It was that disparity that Jesus said God wants to bring together so that worship is in spirit and in truth. In fact, you will notice that it says in verse 24, "God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." This is a mandate, folks. This is not something optional, this is not something preferable, this is something commanded. God wants worship that is sincere from the heart and that is truthful. The two enemies of genuine worship are therefore identified. The first enemy of genuine worship is Jerusalem, hypocrisy, legalism, externalism. And the second enemy is Gerizim, ignorance, the absence of truth.

And even today in the church we are still dealing with those two enemies. There are people who are today content with a barren superficial hypocritical kind of formal orthodoxy. They come, they go through the motions and there are, of course, liturgical churches where this is very obvious...dead churches, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian churches, Roman Catholic churches that still have a form and liturgy that is utterly barren and devoid of life. It is also safe to say that there are less formal churches where churches even like our own where people come and only externally do they participate. They sing hymns with their mouth but their heart is far from God. They go through the motions, they put a little money in the plate, they play the game on the outside, while their hearts are utterly barren. On the other hand, you have the opposite today. You have churches where there is sincerity and all kinds of emotion and all kinds of spirit and expression and they are devoid of truth. And we have to address both of those issues.

We have the liberals to sort of categorize them on the one hand who have all of the external forms down, and they're dead. Or the apostates who would be in that same category who have all the form and there's no spirit at all, it's cold and it's dark. I often wonder why liberal churches are always so dark and why Catholic Churches are so dark. I want to go in and turn all the lights on. Why do they love it so dark in those places? And I guess maybe it's a reflection of the heart.

On the other hand, you have the fast growing Pentecostal Movement full of emotion and light and heat and fury, very often signifying nothing. Where there is the need, desperate need for truth where someone needs to come in and define the God that they are worshiping and someone needs to speak specifically about the character of that God and the attributes of that God and the nature of that God and get beyond the infantile perceptions and erroneous ones.

I so often hear these...these charismatic preachers preaching, you don't hear any liberal preachers preaching because they don't have any audience. But charismatic preachers do and they come with all the histrionics and all the bounce and fire and fervor and emotion and they give people utter misinformation about God. They say things that aren't true about God, that aren't true about Christ, that aren't true about the Holy Spirit and aren't true about interpreting the Bible. And people get all excited about the error.

So on the one hand you have what one writer says, "Men are worshiping with open Bibles and with the name of Christ and the Bible on their lips while the whole congregation is held in the grip of barrenness and lifelessness and powerlessness. Churches where it has been weeks and months and years since hearts have been ravished with the sight of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It has been years since any hymn has been sung with abandonment. Years since a tear has trickled down the face of any worshiper. Years since a hallelujah flowed out of bursting heart." They have truth, but it's heartless.

On the other hand, the Lord wants us to worship in spirit and in truth. Let's talk about what it means to worship in spirit and let's go off with the negative and let's talk about the positive. What does it mean to worship in spirit?

Well spirit here is referring to the human spirit. It's not referring to the Holy Spirit as such, although obviously we want the Holy Spirit to energize everything we do. This is talking about the inner man. This is talking about down inside. This is talking about what we've been noting in Psalm 45:1 how that the knowledge of the Lord and our rejoicing in Him bubbles up from the inside. This is the real self.

So what Jesus is saying here is...Look, it's not a matter of this mountain or that mountain or Gerizim or Jerusalem, it's not a matter of the right place here, it's not a matter of some right time, it's not a matter of right words, right demeanor, right clothes, right formalities, right routines, right activities, it's not a question of having the right little liturgy manual, it's not having the right little missal books so you can march your way through the litany of things that prescribed for you. It is not a matter of place and time and certain formulas and certain demeanor and clothing and formalities, etc., etc. It is a matter of the heart. It's a matter of the inner self.

Ephesians 4:23 talks about the spirit of your mind. And that's the way in which the term spirit is used here. Romans 1:9 says "God is my witness whom I worship with my spirit." There's a good comparative verse. Paul was saying I worship God with my spirit, it's not just formal external worship. We remind ourselves of the familiar words of Psalm 103, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is...where?...within me. Bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul." That is the psalmist saying worship God in spirit from deep within.

Now what does that require? How am I going to do that? How am I going to worship God from deep within? There are several things that are necessary if that kind of worship is going to occur. First of all, there must be spiritual life within. "The natural man understandeth not the things of God. They are foolishness unto him. He cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned," Paul said to the Corinthians. So if you're not a Christian you will not be able to worship God truly from inside in the truest sense of that. You will not be able to worship in spirit because your spirit is dead. Ephesians 2 says, "And you who were dead in trespasses and sins." And in the condition of spiritual death, in the condition of being what Paul called a natural man, you have no capability to comprehend or apprehend divine truth to excite your spirit in the genuine way.

Now you say, "Well what about those Samaritans, what were they doing?" Well, they were being excited by emotional stimulation. They were being excited by some kind of activity, some kind of agency, some kind of manipulation. They may have actually been excited in the hope that they could come to know the true God. And certainly they had enough information in the Pentateuch to know something about the true God and what they did know did excite their hearts.

And here in the case of the Samaritan woman, you might see a God-seeking Samaritan. It may have been that they were worshiping purely by emotional excitement, by a manipulation through whatever processes they engaged. It may have been that there was a real passion in the heart that sought God. But true worship doesn't really happen until we've come alive spiritually, until the inner man has been transformed. Psalm 80 verse 18 puts it this way, "Revive us and we will call upon Thy name." Revive means to give us life, make us alive, regenerate us, give us new birth, take us out of our deadness into life and we will call upon Your name.

So, if you're going to worship the Lord in spirit, you have to be alive spiritually. And we could take that further but I think that's sufficient for this particular occasion. So that to say then a person who doesn't know the Lord, who isn't redeemed, he doesn't have spiritual life cannot really worship God from inside, it's really external and superficial.

Second, if you're going to worship God in spirit you must be alive spiritually and secondly, your heart must be set on God...your heart must be set on God. Now to say that another way, your thoughts centered on Him...your thoughts centered on Him. He must be the major preoccupation of your mind so that as David said in Psalm 16, "I have set the Lord always before me," and that's the perspective. I see everything, as it were, through God, everything. Contemplating God at all times. That's why it's...it's so much a part of the Jewish life in the Old Testament to sing the Psalms and recite the Psalms because they continue to demonstrate the revelation of God, they continue to disclose who God is and God wants that planted continuously, repetitiously in the minds of His people. Contemplating on God on His character and His nature and His mighty works. That's what feeds the spirit and leads the spirit into expressions of worship.

That's one of the reasons among several that I read the Psalms every time we come together on Sunday morning. I read the Psalm because planting the truth about God in your heart is what excites your spirit to worship. I'm assuming that you are spiritually alive and most of you are, you're spiritually alive, so I want to feed that spirit. And so I might read Psalm 47, "O clap your hands, all people, shout to God with a voice of joy, for the Lord most high is to be feared, a great King over all the earth," and just remind you about the greatness and the majesty and the glory and the sovereignty of God. I might read Psalm 48, "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised." Reading further in that same Psalm, taking about His loving kindness, or His mercy, or His grace. I might even read Psalm 46, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." And I'm setting in your spirit that which is true about God which excites the spirit to worship.

As you go through the Psalms again and again, that's exactly what happens. "O God," Psalm 63, "Thou art my God, my soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee." Why? "To see Thy power and Thy glory because Thy loving kindness is better than life." And why do we read the Psalms? To excite the spirit to contemplate the greatness of God and in response to such contemplation to offer

Him worship from deep within.

So the root that generates worship in spirit is meditation on that which is true about God. What does meditation mean? Meditation is not sitting in a corner in a yoga position mumbling your mantra. I don't know what that is, that's dangerous stuff, I know that. But biblical meditation such as the Bible talks about, "Meditate on these things day and night," is simply focusing your whole mind on one subject. I suppose even a New Ager would agree with that. Meditation occurs when you focus your whole mind on one subject and the one subject I want you to focus your whole mind on is God. Your reason, your imagination and your emotion all concentrated on one great reality. We endeavor to do that when you come on a Sunday morning. We read the Psalms so that we plant the great truths about God in your mind.

We sing anthems here. We could come out here and sing, "Jesus loves me, yeah-yeah-yeah," for twenty verses. But that's not going to do what great anthems are going to do, to plant in your mind the things that are great about your God. And we want to do that in our prayer. I always pray a very God focused prayer. I could pray for Aunt May's broken leg, and Uncle Joe's sore elbow, and this guy's problem and that guy's problem and somebody's flat tire...and those all issues of life. And somebody needs a house and a meal and somebody's having surgery and there are a lot of prayers through the week that go on about that, but worship is a different enterprise, it's a different exercise. And in the context of worship the idea is everything focuses on God...the Psalms, the hymns, the anthems, the prayer, everything goes Godward so that we can get you to the place, we are generating the kind of meditation on the character of God that releases the inward spirit to true worship so that worship becomes an overflow of meditating on the great things about God.

You see, that's one of the...that's one of the real blights on contemporary Christianity is that it thinks in such shallow ways. And the more shallow your thinking, the more shallow your worship...to say nothing of how shallow your behavior will be, your worship will be as shallow as your thinking. It takes some meditation.

The inimitable Charles Spurgeon who could say it like nobody else said, "Many Christians love the wheat but they don't grind it. They would have the corn but they will not go into the fields to gather it. The fruit hangs upon the tree but they will not pluck it. The water flows at their feet but they will not stoop to drink it." And what he's talking about is the fact that you have right in front of you all the necessary truth to create the spirit of worship if you'll just take it.

That's what we try to do. As I even preach and teach to you I'm trying to focus you on the character of God, His wonderful character, the character of Christ, His marvelous person and to show you and remind you of what they have done and what they are doing say in the life of Paul as he writes an epistle, or John as he writes, or James as he writes, or wherever we are in the Scripture. Our worship reflects the depth of our focus on the character of God and the character of Christ. And so



we have to saturate our minds with God and with Christ who is the outshining of God's glory. And then like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, our hearts will burn. Why? Because the truth has been told to us and as we meditate on the truth, you remember what they said, "Did not our hearts burn within us," the passion of worship began to rise.

As you read the Bible, read it to know your God, read it to know what He's done, who He is. Read it to know Christ, to know Him better and more deeply. As you meditate deeply on the things of God and the things of Christ, you will set your spirit to worship. It doesn't happen in a shallow environment. You can't just stand up and give people a lot of misinformation about God, jack up their emotions, have them sing repetitious little ditties and call that real worship. It's very shallow and largely emotional.

There's a third component in worshipping with the spirit that I want to mention to you. All of them are critical to this. We talked about spiritual life, it has to come from one who has spiritual life. It is centered on God, that is the meditating process focuses on the greatness of God. Thirdly, it is essential if you're going to worship in spirit to have an undivided heart...to have an undivided heart.

Go back in the Old Testament to a great psalm and we would note a number of them while we're back there, but in Psalm 86--Psalm 86 verse 5 David says, "For Thou, Lord, are good and ready to forgive and abundant in loving kindness to all who call upon Thee. Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer and give heed to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I shall call upon Thee for Thou wilt answer me. There is no one like Thee among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like Thine. All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord, and they shall glorify Thy name for Thou art great and doest wondrous deeds for Thou alone art God."

And then listen to this very important petition. He's doing what you have to do, he's meditating on God, he has a regenerate heart, he's a spiritual man. He says it right back in verse 2, "Do preserve my soul, I am a godly man." He's spiritually alive. He passes qualification one. He secondly passes qualification two because he focuses on God, "O Thou my God, I cry to Thee. Make glad my soul, Thou art good, ready to forgive," as he goes through this wonderful treatment of the character of God. And then in verse 11 he comes to this, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, I will walk in Thy truth...then this...unite my heart to fear Thy name." He wants a singular heart, an undivided heart. Then verse 12, "I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, with...what?...all my heart."

Praise comes from an undivided heart. True worship in its purest form comes from an undistracted heart, an undiluted heart. That's why you can't worship the Lord while entertaining sin in your life. You can't worship the Lord while entertaining some...some wrong attitude toward someone else or toward Him. There's no place for half-heartedness. Worship should be an exhilarating experience. It should be so singular that there is no hesitation and no weight holding back the exploding release of that inward worship. That means you have to deal with sin. You have to deal with the distractions of

this life.

I'll never cease to be amazed how many people can be bored with worship in fifteen minutes, or less. That's not a problem with the worship. Sometimes I hear pastors say, "You know, our worship is just not cutting it. Our people are getting bored, we need a new style." That's not the problem. That's not the problem.

Now I don't want to bore people on purpose. I mean, that's not the goal. I'm not up here saying, "All right, I'm going to weed these folks out and I'm going to be so boring that only the super godly will remain." And that is not the goal. We want to move you along a little bit. And when I am boring, it's not because I'm trying to be, okay? But it is interesting how many people get bored with worship and it isn't because there's nothing there in the worship, it's because there's nothing there in the heart, or there's a divided heart.

You know, I can just open my Bible and have a glorious experience of worship, can you? I can just come before the Lord in prayer and have an exhilarating experience of worship in the silence of my own heart as it brings petitions and gratitude before the Lord.

In Isaiah 29:13, "Then the Lord said, `Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote.'" Boy, there is a sad definition of Israel. Words, lip service, tradition learned by rote, no real reverence and no heart for God. How sad and how common...how common. Where does the church read in the Scripture that we're supposed to make worship entertaining? Where does it say it's supposed to be fun? Where does it say you're supposed to sit back and enjoy every moment of what is happening because it's so inherently enjoyable? I don't find that. I don't find that.

In Ezekiel 33:31 the prophet Ezekiel indicts the same people basically that Isaiah indicted, only Ezekiel came later. The people already had been carried into captivity. And in verse 31 of Ezekiel 33 he says, "And they come to you as people come and sit before you as My people and hear your words but they do not do them for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth and their heart goes after their gain." In other words, they're divided in their allegiance. They have an external commitment to this religious stuff but their heart is indifferent to it and attracted to many other things.

In Luke 16:15 Jesus said, "You are those...He's talking to the Pharisees...you are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men but God knows your hearts." God knows your hearts. And then He gives this unbelievable indictment, He says, "That which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." The very thing that men praise you for God detests. And that's your externalism. You see the key in this whole matter of worship is to worship in spirit and that means you have to be spiritually alive, you have to be focused on God with an undivided heart. Thoughts centered on God's glory, thoughts centered on your own unworthiness and your own sinfulness and the amazing love

and redemption that He has granted to you incite worship.

Let me give you a fourth component if you're going to worship in spirit...the work of the Spirit Himself...the work of the Spirit Himself. You can't just crank it up on your own. Philippians 3:3 says literally we are those who worship in the Spirit of God, we are those who worship in the Spirit of God. Just as we pray in the Spirit, and hopefully preach in the Spirit, and hopefully walk in the Spirit, and hopefully rejoice in the Spirit, and love in the Spirit as the Spirit has shed abroad the love of God in our hearts. In other words, everything we do has to be energized by the Spirit and so if you're going to worship in Spirit you need to be a Spirit-controlled person.

What is a Spirit-controlled person? Well someone according to Ephesians 5 who's literally under the control of the Holy Spirit. "Be not drunk with wine in which is excess but be filled with the Spirit." What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, it's the same thing that Colossians 3:16, it's to be under the control of God's Spirit through commitment to Him and the Word.

So that's sort of the four keys to worship in Spirit. You must be spiritually alive, you must be singularly focused on the Lord without any distraction or divided heart, and you must be energized by the Spirit which occurs when you are yielded faithfully in obedience to that Spirit. Walk in the Spirit and you'll not fulfill the lust of the flesh, you'll not have a divided heart.

What about...what about the opposite for a moment? What is it that hinders worship in the spirit? If we're to worship in spirit, what hinders that? In a word, self. I mean, if you're a believer you cannot be totally focused on the Lord if you're focused on you. You cannot have an undivided heart if your heart is divided between God and you. You cannot be filled with the Spirit if you only yield a portion of your life to Him. It's that simple. It's that simple.

Stephen Charnock wrote this, the Puritan writer, "To pretend homage to God and intend only the advantage to myself is to mock God rather than to worship Him. When we believe that we ought to be satisfied rather than God glorified, we set God below ourselves and imagine that He should submit His own honor to our advantage," end quote. Boy, that is a very well stated comment. Here we have a church that is today so focused on people's needs and people's comfort and people's advantage. Let me read you that last portion again. "When we believe we ought to be satisfied rather than God glorified, we set God below ourselves and imagine that He should submit His own honor to our advantage." Self will always get in the way of worship in spirit.

Now let's talk about worship in truth...just briefly because this is more evident. All worship must be in response to what is true about God. That's why in John 17:17 Jesus said, "Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy word is truth." The Word is the truth that becomes the substance of worship. Psalm 47:7 says, "Sing praises with understanding."

God is not honored when you...when you conceive of Him to be other than He is. God is not honored when you misunderstand His attributes, misunderstand His works, misunderstand His will and His purpose, misinterpret His Word and then try to worship Him with those misunderstandings. Anybody who doesn't rightly know the Word and rightly interpret the truth of the Word does not worship God in a way that pleases Him. We must set forth the truth.

Years ago when I first came to Grace it was quite uncommon to preach as long as I do...still quite uncommon to preach as long as I do. But it was more of a shock then. And people would say to me, "You know, you..how can you have a worship service with such long sermons? It takes up so much time for your sermon." Most churches and even this church when I came here in 1969 had a one-hour service from start to finish. And the idea was to get it in and get it out as quick as you could, and you had a little sermonette for Christianettes slapped in there somewhere. That was generally the pattern, and you got it over with. And it was twenty minutes or whatever.

And people used to say to me, "How can you have worship when you have such long sermons?" And my response always and still is, we spend so much time on the Word of God so that our people can worship in truth. This is not to your disadvantage, my friend, this is to your advantage. I don't believe for a moment that somebody is going to come to this church as a Christian and they're going to listen to one sermon their whole life is going to change for good permanently. It doesn't happen like that. Oh somebody could be saved and it would change, I'm talking about a Christian. You don't get instantly sanctified by some sermon that sort of zapped you and grabbed you and really kind of spun you around on your heels. There might be a step at that point but it's a long process. And over the long haul the reason you people through the years have learned to live triumphant and joyful Christian lives is because you have such sound knowledge of Scripture, it's because you run deep in knowing truth. And there's no shortcut to that. There isn't any shortcut to that.

The fact that you react rightly to the adversities of life and you react rightly to the highs of life as well as the lows, that you react to the challenges of life the way you do, that you take the frightening, painful losses of life the way you do, that you understand the world around you and interpret the times the way you do and that your priorities are what they are is the flowing out of the depth of your understanding of Scripture and the nature of God revealed in Scripture. And that's what allows you to worship in truth. That's why when the early church got together they had fellowship, they had prayer, they had the Lord's table and then they had a long time for the Apostles' doctrine because they needed to know sound doctrine so that they could worship God in truth. And you want to hear the truth through the Word.

And people have asked me, you know, "You do these expositions." I spoke at a pastors conference and it was a huge pastors conference and I was the guest speaker and I got up and I just opened the Scripture and I did an exposition of a passage. And afterwards the man who was in charge said,

"That's...that's pretty technical stuff there. Do you do that in your church every week?"

And I said, "Yeah, twice...once on Sunday morning and once on Sunday night and I've been doing it for a long time."

And he says, "And people will come and listen to that sort of...you know, all those details about everything in the passage."

I said, "Well yeah, they're still there. I'm still there. We do that. And you know what I believe? I believe that the best thing I can do is stand up and tell them what God's Word says. I don't know how to improve on it."

Worship has to be instigated by the Word of God, so truth then is the partner of spirit. And where you have the spirit and the emotion and all of that stuff on the inside, disassociated from truth, you've got a problem because you really can't control that. On the other hand, there's nothing worse than having the truth in a heartless manner.

Why do we sing? Because we want to worship the Lord with our spirit and my spirit wants to sing, doesn't yours? Especially when my spirit gets filled with His Spirit. When you're filled with the Spirit you speak to yourselves in...what?...psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and you sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord. And when I'm singing a hymn, I like to sing. I like the tunes and I like to go up and down on the notes and I like the harmonies and I like all that but I'm also going through the theology of the verses and checking it out because I want to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

So we respond in our spirits to the truth and that's the kind of worship that the Lord wants. There's no premium on ignorance. And there's no premium on indifference. Quite the contrary. Our worship ought to be enthusiastic and excited and full of the joy that the Lord brings by His Spirit but not ever disassociated from the truth.

A final..final footnote. Jesus tells this woman what she needs to know. You go to God and you fall down and you worship Him in spirit and in truth. You acknowledge your sin, you express your faith and you will be on the course to worship the Lord. It's not a matter of time and place, it's a matter of the heart and the revelation of God's Word. The woman believed, she was saved, she went back into town, told the rest, they came out, there was a revival there that day, and for two days later.

Now as we bring out thoughts to an end, turn to Hebrews 10, this is just a point to close. Hebrews chapter 10, I'm not even going to work this outline, I'm just going to give it to you. When you come to worship, come here to worship, right? Now you've got the picture. You've been called to worship. The source of that call is God who saved you to make you a worshiper. You know who the object of

your worship is, it's the God who is spirit and who was incarnated in Jesus Christ and thus is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The nature of that worship is that it rises from deep within you and is associated with the revelation of Scripture so that your worship is in spirit and in truth.

And when you come to worship, here is a summary of how to prepare your heart. Hebrews 10:22...Hebrews 10:22, "Let us draw near..." stop right there. Let us draw near to whom? To God. We're going to come to God to worship, all right? Lord, we come into Your presence. That's the way we like to start our service, I like to pray a prayer at the very beginning, "Lord, here we come, get ready, this is us and we're arriving and we're going to worship You and we're drawing near."

But there are four elements of preparation here. "Let us draw near with a sincere heart." The first thing, sincerity...sincerity. That's back to that undivided heart as the psalmist prayed in Psalm 86, "Unite my heart." Take away all the distractions. And often I'll say that in my prayer. "Lord, help us to put aside all the earthly distractions, all the worldly distractions and come with a single focus." You draw near with a sincere heart, undivided sincerity.

Second, "In full assurance of faith." One is sincerity, two is fidelity. What does it mean full assurance of faith? It means you're not looking back to an old system. He's telling the Jews as he writes this letter to the Hebrews, not looking back to old forms, not looking back to the former religion, but in full assurance of faith...that works plays no role. It's all of faith. You come...fidelity is another word for faith, you come with sincerity, you come with fidelity, fully confident that faith gives you access. In other words, you...you don't come in saying, "Lord, I had a great week this week, I did fourteen righteous deeds and only three sins. The scale is really heavily tipped in my favor so I'm coming." You don't come like that. You come in full assurance that faith is sufficient to bring you there.

And then I love this third one, "Having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience." Hmmm, well what does that mean? Well it means you're coming...I suppose the word might be humility. You're coming in humility because you know your conscience has accused you, you know that there's been sin in your life, but you also know that God in His mercy has sprinkled your conscience clean. He's washed it. You come then on the merit of the cross of Christ. You come with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. When you...before you were saved your conscience just shouted evil all the time. That's how you came to Christ, do you know that? Do you know that one of the components in bringing a person to salvation is a conscience that just screams all the time? Evil, evil, evil, evil, evil... Why do I say that? Because people get saved when they're under the conviction of...what?...of sin. And the conscience has been activated by the truth of Scripture, by the gospel and by the Holy Spirit and so they're under conviction. And you come to Christ and one thing that happens at salvation is all of a sudden that guilty conscience is washed. And that is a humbling reality.

So you come as one who claims no merit, you come simply as one who says I'm here humbly because I was washed. You come then not in your own merit, you come not looking back to some

works system but trusting only in faith as enough to apprehend the presence of God, and you come in humility knowing that you've been washed.

And then fourth, in verse 22, "Having our bodies washed with pure water." Let's use the word purity. You've dealt with your sin on the outside, you've confessed your sin and we always do that, always pray a prayer of confession. We come with sincerity and undivided and true heart, we come with fidelity, realizing that we have the full assurance of access to God through faith alone. We come realizing in humility that we have been washed by the blood of Jesus Christ who cleansed our evil conscience. And we come in purity, having confessed and dealt with our sin.

Every time you worship you need to go through that four-fold examination. Am I sincere? Am I committed to the truth as revealed in the Word of God? Am I placing all of the right of my access to God on the finished work of Jesus Christ? Am I coming humbly knowing I'm utterly unworthy and undeserving of His presence? And have I dealt with sin in my life? And if yes to all of those, then you can say, "Let us draw near." Let us draw near.

James 4 says, "On those terms, draw near to God and...what?...He will draw near to you."

Father, we thank You for our wonderful day together in contemplation of this great theme of worship. We thank You that You have called us into Your presence and we have come with sincerity, fidelity, humility and purity and none of it our own but all because You've granted it to us. We want to be those whose hearts move into Your awesome presence to hear You speak, to hear You speak fearful and wondrous things not lawful to utter, so that our mind, as it were, falls flat, we become weak and totally incapable of telling what our heart hears and sees. We want to come into Your presence and come out unable to speak because it was too wondrous for words. We want to worship You in the beauty of holiness, draw near as You've instructed us and to know that You will draw near to us. Make us a worshipping people, may You be pleased with that worship we bring, for our Savior's glory we ask. Amen.

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