

An Attitude in God's Presence



Thanksgiving, Praise, and Worship (Part 11)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you out of precious truths that God has taught me through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who've been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It encourages me greatly to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write to me, even if it's only a brief note.

Over the past two weeks I've been explaining that whenever we come into God's presence, He requires that we bring to Him various gifts or sacrifices. These include, but are not limited to, gifts from our money or material possessions.

On a higher level, Scripture speaks of various spiritual gifts or sacrifices that God requires us to bring to Him. Specifically, I mentioned three such spiritual gifts or sacrifices: thanksgiving, praise and worship.

Over the past two weeks I've discussed the first two of these spiritual gifts or sacrifices, thanksgiving and praise.

This week I'm going to deal with the third one, worship.

Let me go back for a moment to a brief definition that I gave earlier of these three things, thanksgiving, praise and worship; how they are related and how they differ.

I compared them to the colors of the rainbow. The colors of the rainbow are distinct, but yet they blend into one another. There's no absolute line of demarcation. The same, I believe, is true of thanksgiving, praise and worship. They are distinct, but they naturally blend into one another. There's one way that I suggested to distinguish the three. I said this:

THANKSGIVING RELATES TO GOD'S GOODNESS

PRAISE RELATES TO GOD'S GREATNESS

WORSHIP RELATES TO GOD'S HOLINESS

Now I wouldn't make an absolute law of that, but I think it gives us a good way to think about these three gifts or sacrifices of thanksgiving, praise and worship.

THANKSGIVING BEING RELATED TO GOD'S GOODNESS

PRAISE TO GOD'S GREATNESS

WORSHIP TO GOD'S HOLINESS

Now, holiness is in a class by itself. It's the attribute of God most difficult for the human mind to comprehend. So therefore, is worship. It's the most difficult of all these three gifts or sacrifices for us to understand and offer in a way acceptable to God.

Thanksgiving and praise are primarily utterances of our mouths, but worship is primarily an attitude. It's important to understand this. Every one of the words in the Bible that's regularly translated by any word for worship, is a word that primarily indicates an attitude of the body. This is true both in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New.

Let's look at some of the attitudes which are regularly associated with worship in the Scripture. The first one is to bow the head or the upper body. An example is given in Exodus 4:31. Moses had returned from speaking to the Lord at the burning bush, had received his commission, and brought back to the elders of Israel the news that God was going to deliver them. And in this verse we read:

> "When they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped."

See that worship is expressed by bowing down. Often it includes as well, the stretching out of the hands with the palms upward in an attitude of expectancy; as it were, waiting to receive from God.

An example of this is found in Psalm 143:6 where David says:

> "I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land."

That's an attitude of worship and expectancy. Another attitude that's common in the scriptures is to kneel, to bend the knee. In Psalm 95:6, the Psalmist says:

> "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our God."

It's interesting that in Hebrew, in a way that I couldn't explain in detail, the word for "to kneel" and the word for "knee" are directly connected with the word "to bless." So, when we bend our knee and when we kneel, it's one of the ways that we bless the Lord.

Then another attitude is to fall prostrate or to fall down. In Leviticus 9:24, it says this about the offering of the Levites in the tabernacle of Moses:

> "Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell face down."

That was their response of worship to the supernatural manifestation of God's power in sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice on the altar.

Again, in 1 Kings 18:38-39, after fire had fallen from heaven upon the sacrifice of Elijah on Mount Carmel, this is what happened:

> "Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, 'The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!'"

So that was again the response of worship, the people fell prostrate and they cried out acknowledging God.

This is true not only in worship on earth but it's also true of worship in heaven. In Revelation 4:9-10, we read this description of worship as it's continually conducted in heaven:

> "Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever."

So we see there even in heaven, worship is expressed by the people that inhabit Heaven, even the twenty-four elders who sit in the immediate presence of God, falling down before Him on their faces.

It sometimes amuses me that we're prepared to accept that in heaven and read those passages and see nothing strange

about them, and yet, if people were to do that on earth, most church-goers would be offended or at least extremely surprised. And yet, that is a pattern of worship that continues all through Scriptures throughout the entire history of God's people, it's falling down prostrate on our faces before the Lord.

To fill out this picture of worship that I'm seeking to give you, I'd like to return for a moment to a passage that I referred to earlier in my talk on thanksgiving. That passage is found in Isaiah 6:1-4. It records a vision that Isaiah had and in this vision he saw the worship of Heaven. So again, this is worship on a heavenly level. This is what Isaiah said:

> "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the Temple. Above him were seraphs... [The word 'seraph' is directly connected in Hebrew with the word for fire. So, seraphs are fiery creatures.] Above Him were seraphs, each with six wings; with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the Temple was filled with smoke."

We point out three things there that are represented in that picture: worship, praise and service. Let's look at worship first. Worship was expressed by the fact that the seraphs, in the presence of God, covered their faces and their feet. Reverence, awe, worship. Praise was expressed by their spoken words, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty." Service was expressed by their flying. They were flying to and fro in the service of God.

There's some certain important proportions that we need to notice in this account. The seraphs used four wings for worship and two for service. In other words, worship is more important than service. And then again, worship comes before service. We can compare the words of Jesus when he resisted the devil's temptation to worship the devil. In Matthew 4:10, Jesus said to him:

> "Away from me Satan for it is written [and Jesus is quoting from the book of Deuteronomy] worship the Lord, your God, and serve him only."

So we worship before we serve.

Another concept that's very closely connected with that of worship is fellowship. By a happy coincidence, in the English language both these words end in the ending "ship." "Fellowship" and "worship" are both ends, not means. Fellowship is the end purpose of the Gospel. In 1 John 1:3 John says:

> "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His son, Jesus Christ."

So that's the end purpose of the Gospel, fellowship with God.

Worship is the end purpose of history. In Psalm 66:4, the Psalmist says this:

> "All the earth will worship Thee, and will sing praises to Thee..."

And in Psalm 86:9:

> "All nations who Thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord."

So the consummation of human history will be the whole population of the earth worshipping God. So worship and fellowship, these are two ends to which the Bible directs us and they're closely related. As we fellowship with God, we worship Him. And as we worship Him, we fellowship with Him.

All right, our time is up for today but I'll be back again with you tomorrow at this time.

Tomorrow and for the rest of this week I'll continue with this theme of worship. Tomorrow I'll be explaining what it means to worship God in spirit and in truth.

Radio Program

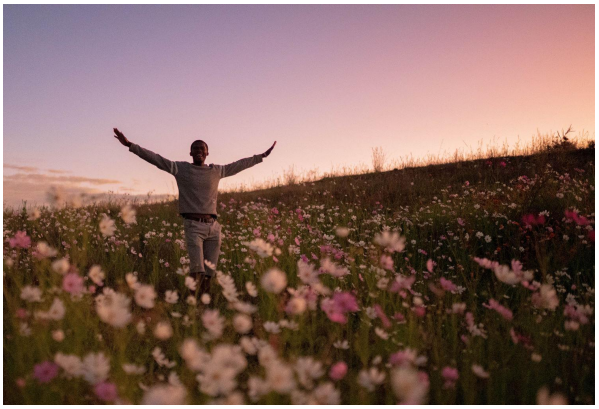
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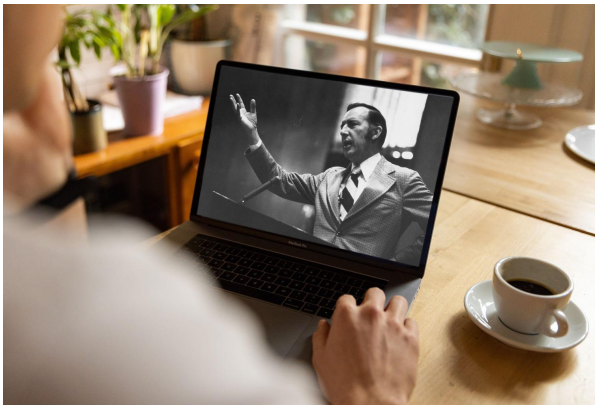
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