

Worship God in Spirit and in Truth



Thanksgiving, Praise, and Worship (Part 12)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as I continue to share with you on one of Scripture's richest and deepest themes, the theme of worship.

In my introductory talk yesterday I made a distinction between thanksgiving and praise on one hand, and worship on the other. I explained that thanksgiving and praise are primarily utterances of our mouths, whereas worship is primarily an attitude of our body.

However, this is not the whole truth because it deals only with that which is external. To be acceptable to God and to conform to His holiness, there are essential conditions that we have to fulfill in the inward attitude of our heart.

In my talk today I'm going to deal with the inward attitude of the heart which alone can make our worship acceptable to God.

The conditions of the heart that alone are acceptable to God are stated by Jesus in His conversation with the Samaritan woman that's recorded in John chapter 4. Jesus met the woman at the well and they entered into conversation, and the woman began to talk about the rival claims of Jerusalem and Samaria as centers of worship. The Jews, of course, worshipped in Jerusalem; the Samaritans in Samaria. But when the woman began to discuss the rival claims of these two physical, geographical locations, Jesus turned the conversation in a new and unexpected direction. Here we read John 4:20-24. The Samaritan woman said:

> "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem. Jesus declared, 'Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship that what you do not know; we worship that what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship

> in spirit and in truth.'"

I want to draw you attention to certain points in that conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

First of all, the words of Jesus to that woman were prophetic. Within a hundred years of that conversation the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and it had been rendered impossible for the Jewish people to worship there. However, before the Temple was destroyed, God made alternative provision for His people to worship Him. He transferred the requirements from a physical location to a spiritual condition. The spiritual condition that Jesus stated was "in spirit and in truth."

The third point is that God actually seeks worshippers of this kind. This is to me one of the most exciting and amazing statements of the Bible, that Almighty God is seeking for people to worship Him. Jesus said, "The Father is looking for worshippers of this kind, the kind that worship in "spirit and in truth."

Let's look at these two spiritual conditions, the inward conditions of the heart that Jesus states "in spirit and in truth." I want to begin with the latter requirement, "in truth."

Let me point out to you eight kinds of persons who are excluded from God's presence. The list is given us in Revelation 21:8:

> "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars, their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

Notice the last category in the list, "all liars." Liars cannot have access to the present of Almighty God. That's why we have to worship Him "in truth." There's a very vivid example of this in the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. You remember that Ananias and Sapphira sold some land and brought an offering from what they had sold and laid it at the feet of the apostles. But, of course, their offering was made to the Lord but they lied about it. They claimed that they'd brought the whole price and they'd kept back part of it. And that lie cost them both their lives. They just fell down dead one after the other in the presence of God. Isn't that a very vivid demonstration that lies and insincerity cannot have access to the presence of God?

Again in 1 John 1:5-6, this is what the apostle John says:

> "And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."

So, when we come to God we're coming into the light. There's no room for darkness, no room for reservations, no room for insincerity. Everything has to be totally open. You notice the word there, "we have fellowship with Him?" In my talk yesterday I pointed out that fellowship and worship go closely together. Both for fellowship and for worship the condition is unvaried, absolute honesty, sincerity, openness. We must worship God in truth.

Now let's look at the second requirements of the inward attitude of heart for worship; that is, "in spirit."

We've spoken about "in truth." Let's try to see what's meant by "in spirit." To understand this we need to grasp the picture that the Bible gives of total human personality. According to the revelation of the Bible, total human personality consists of three interrelated elements: spirit, soul and body.

This is pictures in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 in a prayer of the apostle Paul where he says:

> "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

You'll notice that Paul there is talking about our entire personality and he defines it as spirit and soul and body. We cannot really understand worship unless we understand the functions and interrelationships of these three elements of personality: spirit, soul and body. For it is not the soul or the body that must worship God, but the spirit.

Let's look back for a moment to the account of the creation of man given in Genesis 2:7:

> "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

You see, there are two distinct sources to human personality. One from above, one from below. From above there is the breath, the Spirit of God breathed into man. From below there's his physical nature, the body made of clay. The union of spirit and clay produces a living soul, a living human

personality consisting of spirit, soul and body. But when man sinned and rebelled against God, his spirit was cut off from fellowship with God and became dead to God. So man was then, in the terminology of the Bible, "dead in trespasses and sins." When man in repentance and faith turns back to God, by rebirth his spirit is renewed and made capable of restored fellowship with God. But we have to understand that it's the spirit of man, not the soul, and not the body that's capable of direct fellowship with God. And again we see the principle that fellowship and worship go very closely together.

So it's through his reborn spirit that man can relate directly to God, person to person, Spirit to spirit.

You remember Jesus said, "God is Spirit. They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit…" In the same way that God Himself exists, it's that same inbreathed part of human personality that comes from God the Spirit that alone can relate to God directly and worship God "in spirit."

Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:16-17:

> "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her body? For it is said, 'the two will become one flesh.' But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit [or more literally, 'one spirit']."

So, we're talking about two different ways of two persons uniting with one another. One is the fleshly way, sexual union: a man with a woman. But the other is a spiritual way, spiritual union: the spirit of man with the Spirit of God. It's an amazing picture, but it's very clear. Just as really as a man can relate with a woman physically in sexual intercourse, so a believer can relate with the Lord spiritually in the communion of worship; that is, worshipping God in spirit. Worship is uniting with God in spirit. It's communion with God. It's fellowship with God. It's direct union with God.

But, man's soul is not capable of that. Man's body is not capable of that. It's only man's spirit that is capable of this unique and most precious of all relationships with God, the relationship of union and communion that comes through worship. This is the highest activity of which man is capable, worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

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

Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme of worship. My subject will be "steps to worship." I'll be explaining in a simple, practical way just how we can enter in to worship.

Radio Program

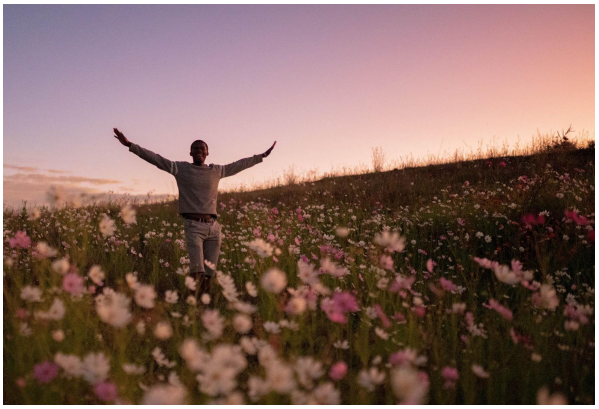
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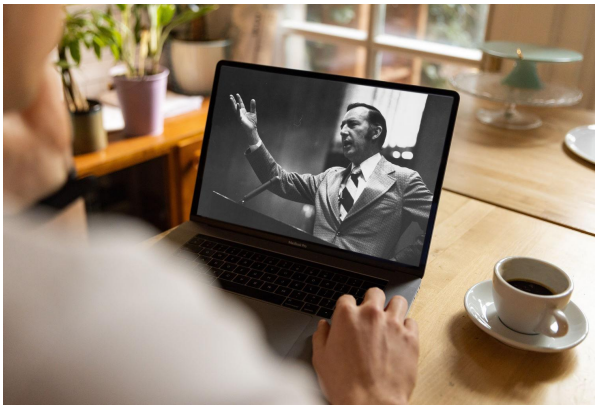
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