

Defining Worship

Part 3: The Essence (continued)

Two standards have been laid out in the previous articles on worship. 1) The essentials: that in all we do God is to be the Subject and Object, the Infinite Creator of our worship, and, 2) the essence: worship is the drawing near of the heart to God by the coming alive of our feelings for God. Worship is an affair of the heart. It is an affair of feeling and of emotion.¹

There are two things evident in the New Testament about worship: 1) there is a striking silence about the outward place and forms of worship and, 2) there is an intensification of worship as an inner, God-ward experience of the heart. Every Christian must come to an understanding in his mind *and* heart that genuine worship is brought to life with true affections for God. Just knowledge and intellect will bring us dead orthodoxy and only feelings will bring us emotionalism. This intensification of worship comes to a culmination as we gather on Sunday to worship. This corporate worship expression and experience is initially fueled in daily expressions of a commitment to Christ and allegiance to God - lived out in the way you have a daily quiet time, in your work, in keep your marriage vows, in the way you handle your money or give daily testimony for Christ.

If there is a de-emphasis on the outward form of worship and a quickening of that inner experience of the heart which we call worship, what, then, is that experience?

Simply put, it is found in two passages of Scripture that are not commonly equated with worship.

*"...according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain [of Christ]."*²

*"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ."*³

This is the inner essence of worship: cherishing, treasuring, savoring Christ as gain - as more gain than anything else life can offer - family, career, retirement, fame, food, friends. Or to use Piper's words:

"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."

"Praising Christ is prizing Christ."

This keeps God at the center of worship. Biblical conviction that the essence of worship is deep, heartfelt satisfaction in Him, and the conviction that the pursuit of that satisfaction is why we are gathered for worship on Sunday is the essence of genuine worship.⁴

*"...true worship is the highest and noblest activity of which man, by the grace of God, is capable."*⁵

¹ John Piper, sermon entitled "Worship is an End In Itself."

² Philippians 1: 20-21

³ Philippians 3:8

⁴ Piper, *ibid*

⁵ James Montgomery Boice, "Reformation in Doctrine, Worship, and Life"(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker), 183

