

Defining Worship

Part 4: "Pure and simple"

*"It is a mark of a spiritual barrenness in the church when Christians come to worship to fulfill a duty rather than to satisfy an appetite"*¹

Times of meaningful corporate worship at Cahaba Park will only result from an out pouring of our week of worship and walking with God. This personal worship grows out of a heart which seeks God in a singular way. This singularity of purpose is seen in the Psalms where David and other Psalmists spoke of a thirsting for God, hungering for Him, yearning for Him. They continually said things like, "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere," (Psalm 84:10); "Whom have I in heaven but You?" (Psalm 73:25); "But as for me, the nearness of God is my good," (Psalm 73:28); and "My soul thirst for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, in a dry and weary land where there is no water," (Psalm 63:1b). Individually we must come to worship thirsty and yearning for God and corporately we must drink deeply of His glory and majesty and be satisfied.

Many times God's people come to worship with a divided heart rather than a heart with a singular purpose. In this we basically approached God by saying "I praise You" or "I love You" so that I can gain something else. For instance, one might pray "Oh, Lord, how I love You - heal my mama!" Or, after a Scripture reading we might express in our mind, "Lord, You are so awesome and full of grace and mercy - I need a husband." Or even, "Great and marvelous are Thy works Oh, Lord - please clinch that deal next week, I need it!" This would mean that our purpose would not be satisfaction in God alone. And this dishonors God. Our supplications to God are an important part of our relationship with Him, but must not take precedence over our singular purpose of magnifying, honoring, cherishing and savoring God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, for thousands of people and pastors the event of "worship" on Sunday morning is conceived of as a means to accomplish something other than worship. We "worship" to raise money; we "worship" to attract crowds; we "worship" to heal human hurts, recruit workers, improve church morale, help marriages and on and on. In all of this we show that we do not know worship - pure and simple. "Genuine affections for God are an end in themselves"² If not, then it is like me saying to my wife Mary, "Sweetie, I love you so much because you make me nice meals." That is not the way love works. Love must terminate on Mary. It does not have a nice meal in view. Now, no one will deny that worship may have a hundred good effects on the life of the church like the things mentioned above. It will, just like true affection in marriage, makes everything better. But unless we enter worship, pure and simple, hungering and thirsting for God and finding ourselves "lost in wonder, love and praise" then we worship for a reason other than to be fully satisfied in God alone.

*"We worship to actively cherish and savor the glory of God, and when we do that, we've arrived at the purpose of our existence."*³

¹ Eric Alexander, "Psalm 63" "Thirsting for God" (Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, 1994)

² John Piper, "Gravity and Gladness" Desiring God Ministries, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2000

³ Ron Mann, "Worship And The Glory of God", Reformation and Revival, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2000