

The Sovereign Grace Messenger

A Publication of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship

"The Lord Hath Prepared His Throne In The Heavens;
And His Kingdom Ruleth Over All."

Psalm 103:19

Issue 27

Summer 2010

WORSHIP IN THE MELTING POT: Rational or Ecstatic Worship?

Peter Masters

Editor's note: This article is the second in a three part series of articles by Peter Masters regarding principles of biblical worship from his book Worship in the Melting Pot. The first principle may be found in the Spring 2010 Sovereign Grace Messenger on page 10: "Spiritual or Aesthetic Worship?" Please refer to the end of this article for publication information.

The second major deviation from biblical principles in contemporary worship is that it promotes a substitute for *rational* worship which we call *ecstatic* worship. The Lord requires that we worship Him 'in spirit and in truth'. The 'truth' part of this means that worship must be *right*, and also that it must be *understandable* or *rational*. Paul echoes this when he insists that Christians pray and sing with the understanding. The conscious, sound mind is the vital human organ of worship. (See *1 Corinthians 14.15*, and chapter 5 – 'Let the Lord Define Worship'.)

Ecstatic worship is completely different. This aims at stirring the emotions to produce a simulated, exalted emotional state. Ecstatic worship takes place when the object of the exercise is to achieve a warm, happy feeling, perhaps great excitement, and even a sense of God's presence *through the earthly, physical aspects of worship* such as music and movement. Among charismatics this is eagerly pursued, the programme being carefully engineered to bring worshippers to a high emotional pitch, and often to a mildly hypnotic state. In non-charismatic circles the objective is a little more modest, but essentially the same – to make an emotional impact. Worship leaders want to bypass rationality and get the feelings going by other means. They want to stir up 'sensations' in order to produce euphoria.

We do not accuse the advocates of new worship unfairly, because they say this themselves in their books and worship guides. The upbeat opening number will (they say) have such-and-such an effect upon worshippers, and then the music should take this or that direction to maintain the mood, and after that move on to another

tempo, volume and key. Instruments, arrangements, chords and beat should be woven into a pattern that will bend and sway the feelings of the people to maximise their feelings for worship.

Frequently, tremendous musical expertise goes into the 'production' of a service, but it must be realised that any attempt to make a *direct* impression on the soul by the use of music or any other earthly tool is *ecstatic* worship as opposed to spiritual and *rational* worship. The latter does not try to manipulate the feelings by earthly techniques, but derives its joy from sincere spiritual appreciation of the Lord, of His words, and of the great doctrines of the faith. Of course, music (and instrumental accompaniment) is permitted by the Lord, but it is not to be deliberately deployed as a means of arousing feelings. 'Feelings' in

worship should be our response to things we understand and appreciate in our minds.

It is true that many hymn tunes touch our hearts because of their strong association with salvation sentiments, and this is wholesome and acceptable. Such tunes have taken on a special quality derived from precious words. But the architects of ecstatic worship techniques have no right to hijack this pleasant phenomenon, and to use music as the chief means of moving hearts and producing feelings. This is carnal, cynical, artificial and manipulative.



It is only as we are moved primarily by intelligent thoughts providing a view of the Lord and His work, that we have genuine and legitimate spiritual feelings. Emotions fanned into flames by sentimental or stirring music may be enjoyable feelings at a purely human level, but they are not worship. The same goes for all artificially generated feelings. If a preacher moves people to weeping by telling ‘tear-jerkers’, their sense of need for God or their repentance will be nothing more than short-lived emotionalism. If, however, the people understand their need through hearing the Word (which is surely moving enough), their conviction and repentance will be genuine and lasting.

Music cannot really move the soul. It only moves the emotions. Valid worship starts in the mind. If it bypasses the understanding, it is not true worship. If it is overwhelmed by physical things, such as the skilful and moving performance of orchestras, it is compromised and spoiled. Such worship reminds us of the Israelites who wanted to supplement manna with other foods. Today many say to God (in effect): ‘You are not enough; I need unusually loud or rhythmic music in addition, to excite me.’

Paul states the prime role of worship in these words: ‘Let all things be done unto edifying’ (see *1 Corinthians 14.26*). The word *edifying* refers literally to the construction of a building, but Paul always uses it to mean the building up of the understanding. Every element of worship must be understood in order to be valid. We are *spiritually* moved, not by melody, beauty or spectacle, but by what we understand. ‘Worship,’ says Puritan Stephen

Charnock, ‘is an act of the understanding applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God . . . It is also an act of the will, whereby *the soul* adores and reverences His majesty, is ravished with His amiableness, embraceth His goodness . . . and pitcheth all its affections upon Him’ (*Works*, 1.298). With our minds we appreciate the Lord, His mighty acts, and the doctrines of His Word. Whether we are directing our praise to Him, or receiving truth from Him, it is the mind that must be active and edified. Emotions must be activated by what is recognised in the mind, and not by the direct power of music, rhythms or bodily movements.

We repeat yet again that in Christian worship we have the privilege of many beautiful tunes, and we are allowed to sing with accompaniment, but these must be kept within reasonable bounds, so that we never depend on them to engineer our feelings. The new worship, however, is all about music and song being intentionally and blatantly used to have a direct and major influence upon the feelings. John Wycliffe, the ‘morning star of the Reformation’, was strongly critical of the use of song to ‘stir to dancing’, or to arouse

the feelings in worship. He warned his contemporaries in the words of Augustine – ‘As oft as the song delights me more than that which is sung, so oft I confess that I sin grievously.’ Music is a wonderful gift from the Lord, but it must never rival or drown worship offered in spirit and in truth.

The same point is made by John Wesley in his advice to hymn singers written in 1781. He wrote:

‘Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself or any other creature. Attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, AND SEE THAT YOUR HEART IS NOT CARRIED AWAY WITH THE SOUND, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward when He cometh in the clouds of Heaven.’

To clarify the issue, let us try once again the simple test question put at the close of the aesthetic worship chapter. Why would any church want to increase its customary, traditional instrumentation, and change its style of worship? The answer may be along these lines: ‘Because this will lift us up, warm and excite us, and we will then feel the Lord more.’ Such an answer would show that *rational* worship is being set aside, and *ecstatic* worship is taking its place. There can be no greater enjoyment than to respond with *spiritual* appreciation to great *spiritual* blessings. Why should



Dr. Peter Masters has been the minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle (Spurgeon’s) in Central London since 1970. Some of the author’s other books include *Psalms and Hymns of Reformed Worship*, *Do We Have a Policy? For Church Health and Growth*, *Only One Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, *Steps for Guidance*, *The Charismatic Phenomenon*, *The Healing Epidemic*, and *Biblical Strategies for Witness*. All of these titles are published by The Wakeman Trust, London, UK.

we need more instruments to improve on this? Any group, band or orchestra will be likely to introduce an ecstatic element to praise, and this is against the principles of New Testament worship.

It is undeniable that the new worship sets out to stir emotions externally and artificially. It is all so like Catholicism in this respect. Their worship, we have seen, is an aesthetic offering. It is also ecstatic, designed to engage and satisfy the emotions. It bombards the senses with smells and bells, processions, chants and so on. The old Latin mass was not about *understanding* but making an *impression* on the senses. Touching requiems were composed to move people emotionally. The mystery plays of Rome were calculated to appeal to and move the feelings. The medium was considered to be more enjoyable and emotionally effective than the message, and we are back to this in present-day evangelicalism. The tools are certainly different, but there can be no doubt that contemporary Christian worship shares the same theatrical and earthly ideas as Rome.

One of Britain’s pioneers of new worship outlined his own pilgrimage in a magazine article. His story was alarmingly revealing. He recalled how, as a young man, he once wearily rose in his pew at the beginning of a service – (continued page 4)

Inside This Issue:

Rational or Ecstatic Worship? Peter Masters	1
Worship Richard Smith	5
Worship and Our Light Affliction Jon Cardwell	8
David and Worship Larry Dean	11
What is Spiritual Worship? Charles H. Spurgeon	13
Editorial: Strange Fire Ron Staley	14
World Missions: Philippines Brian Ellis	15
World Missions: Updates	16
Worship in Indonesia Interview with Pak Nunu	18
Quiet before the Lord Carolyn Staley	20

All articles reflect the opinions of the author, submitter or editor. The views of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship are not being officially represented herein.

Comments or suggestions may be made to the editor.
Contact information:

The Sovereign Grace Messenger
Pastor Ron Staley, editor
5452 Spotslee Circle
Mechanicsville, VA 23111

Phone: (804) 321-2110
Email: ronstaley1@verizon.net

Inquiries regarding missions or missions articles should be addressed to the missions editor.

Contact information:

Missions Editor, SGM
Pastor Larry Dean
2779 Malone Rd. N.
Nesbit, MS 38651

Phone: (662) 429-3813
Email: larrywdean@aol.com

Special Thanks

A special word of thanks to Pastor Larry Dean and Cristy Carr. Pastor Dean undertook, at the editor's request, to secure some of the writers for this issue of *The Sovereign Grace Messenger* as well as gathering the information found in the missions section. Cristy Carr took the responsibility for the tedious task of formatting, organizing and placing all articles into the publication.

A special word of thanks is also due to my wife, Carolyn, who though going through a difficult time of radiation and chemotherapy due to a recurrence of colon cancer, at my request, yet wrote an article for this issue. We sincerely thank all who have prayed and do pray for her recovery and health during this time.

Ron Staley, editor

Funding by Contribution

It is our desire to publish *The Sovereign Grace Messenger* three times yearly. This depends upon sufficient funds being received by contribution to the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship (SGBF) general fund and those specially designated for the *Messenger*.

Contributions may be sent to:

SGBF
c/o New Hope Baptist Church
5452 Spotslee Circle
Mechanicsville, VA 23111

Checks may be made payable to the "SGBF". All contributions are tax deductible.

Contact Information for the Current Officers of the SGBF

Chairman: Tom Henry, assistant pastor, Bible Baptist Church
3150 Sutton Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63143.
Phone: (314) 645-4248 Email: Bbcinstl@aol.com

Vice-Chairman: Jon Cardwell, pastor of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church
5440 Alabama Highway 202, Anniston, AL 36201
Phone: (256) 689-1283 Email: sgbcanniston@gmail.com

Secretary: Larry Dean, pastor of Bridgetown Baptist Church
2779 Malone Rd. N., Nesbit, MS 38651.
Phone: (662) 429-3813 Email: larrywdean@aol.com

Treasurer: Ron Staley, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church
5452 Spotslee Circle, Mechanicsville, VA 23111
Phone: (804) 321-2110 Email: ronstaley1@verizon.net



Moving?

We have to pay full cost for returned mail. So please do remember to give us your change of address.

‘ . . . resigned to a miserable morning, and thought to myself how dreadful it was that the hymn we were singing had so many verses. Most of the lines made no sense to me at all. Worse still, there were three more hymns like this before the meeting was finished! The whole thing was dreadfully boring.

‘I tried my best to inject feeling into the “worship”, but it was like squeezing a shrivelled orange for the last drop of juice, only to be disappointed when nothing came.

‘Worst of all, I kept thinking over what the pastor had said at the start of the service. He told us that we would spend eternity engaged in worship. I couldn’t think of a more dreadful prospect. Surely that would be eternal endurance, not eternal life!’

The writer was very frank. He was not complaining that the service was unsound or poorly conducted. He was disparaging *any* traditional worship service. He went on to say that he discovered enjoyment in new songs and music, because these stirred his passions and allowed him liberty for the uninhibited expression of his feelings. But why could he not identify with the great hymns of the faith in the church of his youth? Why did the directing of sincere thoughts and words to God fail to touch him, and even bore him to distraction? The answer is that for him, emotions had to be worked up by external aids and uninhibited actions. Feelings had to be manufactured by rhythm, repetition and physical action. This is just what we mean by ‘ecstatic’ worship. Tragically, no one told this young man what he was getting into, and its artificiality and pandering to the flesh. No one helped him – assuming he possessed real spiritual life – to love the Lord with the heart and with the mind.

We can understand how necessary the techniques of ecstatic worship are within the charismatic movement. Here, because of the shallowness of preaching, large numbers of people are not genuinely converted. They therefore need artificial emotional stimulation for without this there would be nothing for them to enjoy. Similarly, in some of the so-called mega-churches of the USA, where the true challenge of the Gospel is greatly watered down so as not to offend those who attend, large numbers of unconverted people depend on the external emotional impact of musical-song

productions. If people are brought to easy professions, and not truly changed by the power of the Spirit, they will not be capable of spiritual appreciation, which is the basis of true worship.

Leading exponents of new worship often speak against hymns as too cerebral and complex. They say that ‘meaning’ obscures ‘feeling’! They want mainly choruses, because these, with their minimal truth content, do not get in the way of the music and its effect upon the emotions. They have been charged with ‘dumbing down’ worship, and the charge is true.

“Valid worship starts in the mind. If it bypasses the understanding, it is not true worship. If it is overwhelmed by physical things...it is compromised and spoiled.”

–Peter Masters

A word must be said about the extreme exploitation of ecstatic worship, which really amounts to *mystical* worship. This happens when the emotional impact of music and song is designed to give the impression of a ‘direct touch’ of God, or an extraordinary sense of union with Him. In non-Christian mystical religions this sensation is produced by such techniques as contemplation and repetition of thoughts. In charismatic worship it is worked up by powerful musical manipulation, participants swaying with closed eyes, upturned faces and outstretched hands, yielding themselves wholly to the impact of repeated words, and music. The sentiments of their choruses and hymns often claim a direct touch from the Lord, or a strong sense of His surrounding arms. Instead of approaching God by faith, and reflecting on His sure Truth and His wonderful work, such worshippers manufacture a ‘direct’ impression of God’s presence.

Mystical worship represents the extreme flank of ecstatic worship, but it now has an immense following around the world. The understanding is unfruitful, but this hardly matters. Spirit and truth are outmoded.

Artificially induced feelings are king. Is this mystical extreme now getting into non-charismatic circles? The alarming answer is that it is, as a statement by a non-charismatic American seminary professor shows. Here is his widely accepted definition of worship.

‘Worship is an encounter in which God’s glory, Word and graces are unveiled, and we respond, in songs and prayers of celebration. Worshippers seek an encounter with the glory of God, the transcendent power and numinous mystery of the divine.’

Notice the word ‘encounter’. Is it an encounter by faith? No, it is nothing other than a mystical encounter with the *glory* of God. Are we reading too much into this? No, sadly, because it is also described as an encounter with the *transcendent power* of God! Surely the language is far too powerful to describe anything other than a felt, mystical sensation. The use of the words *numinous mystery* are conclusive, because *numinous* refers to the awesome presence of divinity. This theologian seriously believes that worship is a *felt* encounter with the glorious presence of God in a fully mystical sense. He goes on to show how this is produced by the contents and trappings of a service.

We must take warning that the old definitions are being discarded with indifference and sometimes even contempt, and new ideas are being propounded which are totally contrary to biblical and reformational teaching. The new worship is firmly ecstatic (and also largely mystical) rather than rational and faith-reliant. Bearing in mind those who feel that an element of new worship songs may be safely adopted by ‘traditionalists’ – can it be wise even to sip from this ecstatic stream?

© Peter Masters 2002. Used by permission.

This extract comes from *Worship in the Melting Pot*, chapter 3: 3 Broken Principles II by Peter Masters. Published in 2002 by Wakeman Trust, ISBN 978 1 870855 33 4

Worship

Richard Smith

The issue of worship has been written about and delved into from many angles. However, some of the most basic and important issues concerning worship are not really thought of in our daily lives or in terms of corporate worship as well. These are issues of the heart. It is not okay to have perfunctory and external obedience in any of the commands of God, and it is not okay in worship either. Worship is either the true worship of God or it is nothing more than doing what is pleasing to man. John 4 gives us the conversation Jesus had with the Samaritan woman at the well. In many ways it is a simple discourse in which Jesus draws the woman to see her sin and then manifests Himself to her as the Messiah. But it also goes beyond that in giving the Church in all ages some profound truths that are to guide worship.

The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers.

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:19-24).

Previous to the verses given in the quote, Jesus exposed the sin of the woman's heart and life. This was what led her to perceive that He was a prophet. As soon as she perceived that she went directly to the issue of the location of worship, which was a major difference between the Samaritans and the Jews. Jesus took her away from thinking that the physical location was the primary point in worship. He then told her in a direct way that salvation was from the Jews and that essentially her worship was in ignorance. True worship, then, is in spirit and truth. It is in truth rather than ignorance. It is in the spirit of the soul rather than a particular location.

Those two simple truths are profound with enormous applications. The first application is that worship is to please God and not self. So many times in our modern day we hear words like "but I like it that way" and "no one will come if we do it that way." The purpose of worship, however, is God. If we desire to do things simply to please ourselves, then we have stopped worshipping God and are worshipping self. The Samaritans had a tradition that they worshipped on their mountain. Their tradition was wrong because it was not worship in truth and the spirit. This text should pierce our souls as well. Are we more concerned with our tradition than we are with the worship of God? Are we more concerned to enjoy our kind or type of music than we are to truly worship God? Are we more concerned to fit in with a particular type of music in order to attract people than we are to worship God?

A second application is that we must not use methods in worship that arouse the sin nature. As Calvin noted, our hearts are factories of

idols. The heart will make idols and bring its idols of love to worship in the name of God. But worship must be in truth and also be true worship. The heart is so deceitful that it can use traditional music or modern music to worship itself. We can have certain kinds of music that we like and it may bring pleasant memories or feelings as we sing

them. But that is not worship. Music is a powerful medium to move the affections and passions of the soul. But that is not the same thing as the soul being drawn by truth in worship of God. It is God Himself that we must behold and be drawn to in order to worship. If it is the music that draws forth our feelings rather than God Himself we are not worshipping the true God. Even pagans have great feeling in worship.

The text tells us that God seeks a certain kind of people to be His worshippers. Without focusing on this too much, note that He does not seek those without truth and those who do not worship in spirit. Methods that arouse the sinful nature can be used while saying words of truth. The sinful nature can be aroused by methods that focus on self and the feelings of self rather than on God. Certain kinds of methods and music draw on deep feelings that lead people to focus on self. True worship draws people from being self-centered to being God-centered. When people only think of their own feelings rather than adore God for who He is, true worship of God has not occurred. The worship of self has. This shows us the great danger there is in religious things when self is focused on. The Pharisees fasted and prayed (Mat 6), but only for self. We can "worship" in many ways, but only for self, too.

A third application of our text is that repentance is necessary for true worship. The Samaritan woman was told about her sin regarding the men she had been with and of the fact that she did not worship in truth. True worship will not occur in our souls apart from repentance. In the modern day worship is usually thought of as a time where we sing songs to God, but that is to be guided by a bulletin rather than Scripture. Worship is to be what the soul does in response to God's work in the soul. In limiting this to a corporate church service, worship should start in the soul the night before as it prepares for corporate worship. Worship includes praying, Scripture reading, singing, and especially preaching. However, a soul that is in unrepentant sin cannot worship in truth or in spirit. All sin is in some form an idol and we cannot worship God with idols in our hearts. It is impossible to worship God in spirit when our inner soul is wrapped in a lover's embrace to sin. For a soul to worship in truth and spirit a soul must be a repenting soul. A soul that will not turn from its sin is not a soul that can worship.

A fourth application is that God is the center of worship and not human beings. This application is certainly linked with the third application. By definition (Bible's) sin is to stray from God and to follow our own way. "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). This is also seen in Romans 3:23 where "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In other words, human beings seek themselves and not the glory of God. Each time a person tries to enter into worship, the self must be turned from so that God will be worshipped. When Paul wanted to send a minister to the Philippians, that is what he had to deal with as well: "For they all seek after their own interests, not

"True worship draws people from being self-centered to being God-centered."

--Richard Smith

those of Christ Jesus” (2:21). In Matthew 16:23 Jesus said this to Peter: "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." In times that we think of as worship and we set our minds on our own interests and pleasures, we are not setting our minds on the things of God but on the things of man. When we do that, even if our feelings are high while using words about Him, we are like Satan who wants us to have our affections on self and not God.

True worship is thoroughly God-centered. It must be a true worship of God with Him as the object of the exalted thoughts and desires of the soul. It is easy for our deceitful hearts to have those in some sense, but then to focus on the feelings and essentially use God to worship self. In Matthew 16:24, just after He said the scathing words to Peter, He said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." In other words, Jesus specifically addressed Peter and told him that in some sense he was Satan for seeking his own interests and not those of God's. But His address to all was that they also must deny self, take up their cross, and follow Christ. In worship, therefore, all must deny self to seek God. The denial of self is in a very real sense a form of repentance. It is to turn or be turned from following the ways and loves of self to the ways and loves of God. If we are to worship in spirit and truth, we must be turned from the ways and loves of self to the ways and loves of God. That is simply another way to say that true worship must be in truth and in spirit.

The Pharisees are prime examples of this. They would have said that they were doing all for God. They would have said that they crossed land and sea to make converts for God. They would have said that they tithed for God and said that they had no God before Him. They would have said that they memorized Scripture and prayed to Him. Yet we have the Divine testimony that they did those things to appear righteous before men.

In the holiest and the most religious of our actions there is the desire to do them for self-righteous motives and for motives of self. But true worship must be in truth according to God and to be in spirit according to God.

The Bible is filled with what pleases God. Worship, to be true, must be intended to please Him. It must also be from His Word or we will be operating according to our own desires. Psalm 135:6 tells us that "Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps." Philippians 2:13 tells us that "it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Whatever God does in our souls is to be expressed for His good pleasure. This is basic to all that believers are to be and do. It is to be for His glory and pleasure. His pleasure is in His glory. The perfection of Jesus is seen in John 8:29: "He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." If we are to be like Christ we are to always do the things that are pleasing to Him. True worship must be intended to and actually please Him.

Believers are to be ambitious. "Our ambition, whether at home or

absent, to be pleasing to Him" (II Co 5:9). We must "learn what is pleasing to the Lord" (Eph 5:10). We are to preach the Gospel "not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts" (I Thess 2:4). The same Lord Jesus who did all to please the Father now equips "you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever" (Hebrews 13:21). True worship is worked in His people by Christ and has the intent and ambition to please God. The one we desire to please is the one we worship.

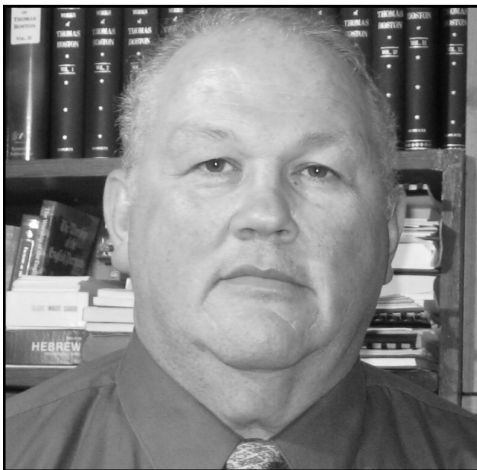
The fifth application is taken from the words of Hebrews 12: "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire" (vv. 28-29). The first petition of the Lord's Prayer is to pray for His name to be hallowed, which is to pray for His name to be treated with reverence and awe and to be glorified. Prayer is worship and teaches us about worship. Any worship of God that is done in truth must be done in reverence and awe. It must not be external words

alone, but it must be done from a heart that is in awe of the thrice holy God. We are to do this because God is a consuming fire. He is still a consuming fire and so true worship is to be in reverence.

The sixth application may not sound like it comes from the text, but it is certainly an implication of the words of the text to worship in truth and in spirit. Due to space this will not be set out fully. The focus of worship is to be the glory of God manifested by joy in Him, yes, but also in reverence and awe. It cannot be just a joy that we have based in feelings, but a joy in Him that is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is a part of worship that I fear is so

lost in our day. Worship is not just to have the right words, the right song, nor is it just to have the right music. It is to be a fruit of the Holy Spirit and not just a feeling produced by familiar music or self-centered thoughts of God. Worship is to be moved by the love of God and which is the fruit of the Spirit. True love is only in the soul by the Spirit when Christ is worshipped as God in truth. All worship that is not from love is of no profit (I Cor 13:1-8).

Our text tells us that we are to worship in spirit. But it does not tell us how to obtain that. However, John 15:5 gives us a clue: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." Worship in spirit is at least spiritual worship; apart from the fruit that flows from the vine this will not happen. If we don't have Christ, we don't have true worship. Jesus taught this when He said that He was "the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). There is no access to the Father in worship apart from Christ who is Truth Himself. He is the very truth of God and apart from the Truth of Christ Himself and the Truth He taught, there is no access to the Father. Our worship must be centered on Christ, but not just repeating words about Jesus, but centered on Christ as the very display of God Himself. The Gospel itself is the very glory of God shining in the face of Christ in the hearts of people (II Cor 4:6).



Richard Smith is a sinner saved living in Lawrence, KS where he has been a pastor and interim pastor for some time. He is a former Spurgeon Associational Missionary, husband to one wife, and father of five children. He blogs at www.GodlovesHimself.org.

Jesus Christ, as His Divine nature, is the very shining forth of the glory of God (Heb 1:3). Christ was and is the perfect image of God. When the Father beholds the Son He sees His own image and glory shining forth. This is one of the reasons that a believer can worship. It is because the Father takes the believer and unites that believer to His Son. The believer's life is then hidden with Christ (Col 3:3) and Christ becomes the very life of the believer (Gal 2:20). The Father loves the Son and therefore those who have Christ share in the love of the Father for the Son. When the Father beholds the believer, He sees His own glory shining forth because it is Christ in the believer. In worship, therefore, we are not there to please God with our own feelings, but we must realize that it is Christ Himself who pleases the Father. This is how we learn to please the Father. We are to bow in humility before Him and the life of Christ is to flow through us. Worship apart from Christ is not a true worship of the true God.

This is also seen in the 2nd commandment. "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4). This is set out in Paul's sermon in Acts 17:29 as well: "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man." We don't have to make objects of a material substance to have idols. Colossians 3:5 instructs us as to how our own desires and greed can be idols: "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry." When we have wrong thoughts, ideas, and doctrines of God, we are idolaters. When we fall down in our hearts before wrong ideas of God, we are idolaters. The only true God has expressed the truth about Himself in Christ. It is only when we have the true idea of God in Christ can we truly worship.

If we do not have the Spirit working the truth and love of God in us, what we are doing is not spiritual. Worship, to put it bluntly, is a fruit of the Spirit or it is a fruit of our own self-will. The fruit of the Spirit includes love and joy. There is no worship of God apart from love of God. There is no worship of God apart from some degree of joy in God. But love for God must come from God since He is the only source of true love. True joy in God can only come from God as that is the work of the Spirit. I John 4:7-8 teaches this: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." Love is from God and the only ones that love are born of God and know God. Romans 5:5 tells us how this is given to the believer: "because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." We can only worship in truth if we have Christ, but we can only have spiritual worship and life when the Holy Spirit is working spirituality in us.

What should have become obvious at this point, then, is that worship is far more than music. Worship only occurs when the soul is the instrument that God is playing His glory in. Worship is the inner part of the human soul being given over to the pleasure of the living God.

But of course God only has pleasure in beholding Himself in His perfect image who is Christ. Worship only occurs when the Holy Spirit has worked love for the Father in the soul and the soul has the fruit of that joy in Him. This is fellowship with God and this is to bear the fruit of the vine. The true worship of God is a spiritual activity and will only happen when the soul repents of its self-centered desires and pleasures (even religious pleasures) and is given over to please God. True worship will only happen when the soul gives up seeking its own ways and its own pleasures (even in religion) so that it may see God Himself. It is only when the soul has been turned from self that it can be filled with Him. The soul that is filled with the presence of God knows that all that must happen at this point must be conducive to reverence and awe.

When a local congregation comes together it should be coming together to seek the presence of God. If it uses something called

"If we are to worship in spirit and truth, we must be turned from the ways and loves of self to the ways and loves of God. That is simply another way to say that true worship must be in truth and in spirit."

-Richard Smith

"worship" to seek human beings to attend, it is seeking to please men and not God. Using music to alter the moods and feelings of souls is not conducive to the true worship of God. There are certain kinds of music that are jarring to the soul and are not in accordance with the reverence and awe of God. There are certain kinds of music that are not conducive to spiritual worship when it is directed at physical feelings. But there is also a kind of preaching that is not in accordance to reverence and awe of God and nor to spiritual worship. The concept of worship has largely been lost today. No longer do we think of worship as a soul being taken over by God, but it is now limited to forms of music. This has harmed the Church because it has diminished true worship in both the singing and the preaching. It has also

diminished the place of preaching and the ordinances or sacraments. A true church is to be a church in worship in all it does. To repeat, all that a church does is to be true worship.

A true church is a collection of believers who are the body of Christ. When the church gathers to worship, it is so that God would be pleased with the manifestation of His glory in Christ. If a believer loves God with all of the soul, that is what the believer desires as well. Believers are to long and pray for the glory of God to be manifested. That is the intent of God in worship because He created all things for His glory. The Church especially has been saved to the praise of the glory of His grace (Eph 1:6). Therefore, that should be the goal of each church and person as well. The music, the preaching, and all a church does must be to that goal. All true worship must be Trinitarian. It must be to the Father as revealed by the Son and it must be by the work of the Spirit in giving love and joy through Christ to the Father, which is simply the glory of God being manifested. There is no worship apart from reverence and awe, but neither is there worship apart from love and joy. Our music and all we do must be to that end. Self has no place in true worship. God alone decides what is true worship and all true worship must come from Him through Christ and by the Spirit. We are not left to our own desires and pleasures to decide what true worship is and what it is not. That has already been decided. Will we seek to humble ourselves and then to worship Him in spirit and truth for His glory and pleasure? If not, we will only worship ourselves.

Today's Christianity has slowly changed some of the prevailing perspectives concerning worship. For many, worship has been reduced to the congregational gathering on one or more designated days

Worship and Our Light Affliction

Jon Cardwell

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—2 Corinthians 4:17

Although Job knew nothing of the conversation that took place at the heavenly throne between God and Satan, and although Job was brought to abject poverty, which included the

of the week. Even further, some have reduced worship to only certain aspects within that public gathering. Yet, even further still, some only see worship as the song portion of that corporate assembly; and worse, only particular songs are designated as "worship," as opposed to what they identify as "praise." Therefore, we fail to see our very lives as an expression of worship.

death of his children, Job worshipped God. In fact, he not only praised Jehovah (*blessed be the name of the LORD*), but he also praised God for His sovereignty (*the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away*). Job's worship presented both true worship and spiritual worship. Let's take a look at each.

True Worship in Suffering

Man was created in the beginning for worship; and even fallen mankind was redeemed by Christ's precious blood for worship. Several catechisms, from Westminster's to Spurgeon's, open with this statement: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever" (1 Cor. 10:31; Psa. 73:25-26).

Job had reason to mourn. He lost everything in moments. His loss made the American stock market crash of 1929 look prosperous. Yet, Job kept a clear head. He worshipped God and didn't sin against Him foolishly. How did Job keep a clear head? His worship was rooted and grounded in the truth. Job realized that he came into the earth with nothing and that he would also leave the earth with nothing (*Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither*). We read this truth in the New Testament as well: "*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*" (1 Tim. 6:7).

If our very lives are instruments of worship unto God, especially as souls redeemed by the atoning sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, then we may be minimizing or even missing many blessed dimensions of true spiritual worship. One much overlooked aspect of worship is our worship of God through, or because of, our trials, tribulations, afflictions and sufferings; and what better way to explore that aspect of worship than through the life of Job?

The Word of God promises that we would suffer (Phil. 1:29); that we would be hated (Jn. 15:18-19); that we would be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12); and in fact, that we would have tribulation: "*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (Jn. 16:33).

Most of you probably know the story of Job but it may be wise to review some things to refresh our memories. Although the story is presented as poetic literature, Job was a very real person, mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14, 20 and James 5:11. He was a prosperous man (Job 1:1-3), who was "*perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil*" (Job 1:1). Job desired to do righteously before God, and because he revered God, Job despised and shunned evil.

In the last portion of John 16:33 cited above, we not only have the promise of tribulation from the Lord, but also the peace and comfort contained therein. As Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6), we worship Him in our sufferings because He is our peace (Eph. 2:14), as well as the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-5). The source of our joy and peace in the midst of sufferings is Christ, and most specifically, in what He has done by way of His atoning sacrifice: "*...but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (Jn. 16:33). The story of Job also identifies for us the truth of the cross of Christ within the suffering of this upright man.

One day the angels of God presented themselves before the LORD; and Satan presented himself as well (Job 1:6). The LORD asked Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan replied, "*From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it*" (Job 1:7). God said, "Have you considered My servant Job? There's none like him in the earth. He's a perfect and upright man; one that fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8). Satan said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Haven't you protected him, his house, and all he has? Haven't you blessed his labors and increased his cattle upon the land? If you smite all that he has, he will curse You to Your face" (Job 1:9-11). God said, "Okay, all that Job has is in your power; ONLY, don't lay a hand on him" (Job 1:12). So, Satan left God's presence and in Job 1:13-19, Satan ruined Job's crops, destroyed his livestock, and killed Job's children. Upon receiving the news, the Bible tells us what an upright, God-fearing man does: he worshipped God. It is written,

Job prophetically proclaims the truth concerning Christ's sufferings upon Calvary's cross: "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him*" (Job 13:15). The only man that can make that claim, maintaining righteousness before God in the face of death, is Jesus Christ, who was "*without sin*" (Heb 4:15). Though the proclamation of Christ crucified will bring persecution and tribulation, it is only in embracing God's grace by the truth of the cross that we have peace and comfort in our sufferings.

"*Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly*" (Job 1:20-22).

Job also speaks of the Christ's crucifixion when he says, "*He cometh forth like a flower that is cut down*" (Job 14:2). The issue of judgment is pondered in Job 14:3, whereas we know that Christ received judgment on behalf of His redeemed by condemning sin in His own flesh (Rom. 8:4). We are given a hint of the doctrine of regeneration that occurs by grace when Job asks, "*Who can bring a*

clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4). Job 14:7 would seem to foreshadow the death of the righteous Branch which sprouts eternal life as Job says, *"For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease."* The *"root [waxing] old in the earth"* (Job 14:8) would then speak of the eternal existence of Christ, as well as Christ's burial in a tomb for *"a set time"* (Job 14:8-13). In Job 14:14-15, the resurrection is pondered. We could go on and on as we look at the texts through a Christ-exalted, cross-centered, gospel-saturated lens.

In one of Job's early discourses, he speaks an incredibly important truth when he seeks someone to plead for him, not only because of the calamities that have befallen him, but also against the accusations that have come upon him. He wants someone to vindicate him; someone to justify him. He desires a mediator to plead for him before God. He desires an intercessor to pray on his behalf. He desires an advocate to represent him at the judgment bar; and we know that he is asking for Jesus Christ. Job says, *"O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour!"* (Job 16:21). Through Christ's atoning death, we have that exalted Mediator: *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"* (1 Tim. 2:5-6). In Christ, we have that perfect Advocate: *"And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 Jn. 2:1).

Job also prophesies the truth of Christ's resurrection and heavenly reign, as well as the promise of the resurrection in the last day: *"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"* (Job 19:25-26). Jesus Himself promised that He would raise every one drawn of the Father in that day, *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"* (Jn. 6:44).

Spiritual Worship in Suffering

Job worshipped Jehovah God in spirit. Although he knew nothing of the conversation between God and Satan, Job trusted in the sovereignty of God when he praised Him for his situation: *"the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD"* (Job 1:21). The declaration of this truth must come by faith because it is an expression of Job's trust in God. That's spiritual worship.

Suffering transforms us in two basic ways and the result of that transformation produces worship "in spirit" (at least this is one aspect of spiritual worship as it pertains to suffering). Suffering, first, strengthens our faith; and second, makes us more like Christ.

Suffering strengthens faith. Although Job practiced the external

religion of the Old Testament, offering sacrifices for himself and his family (Job 1:5), his external religion was a product of the internal reality of his faith in God. We know this because, after the first set of calamities, he praised God in spirit, giving evidence of his faith, trusting in a sovereign God (Job 1:20-22).

Yet, God brought Job further in his faith. The LORD did not merely allow for Job's faith to be manifested, He also strengthened Job's faith through more adversity. Job 2:1-6 recounts a second conversation between Satan and Jehovah, whereas Satan says, *"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face"* (Job 2:4-5). Satan is allowed to inflict Job physically, yet, he also received strict orders from God to spare Job's life; so Satan struck Job's body with boils from head to toe (Job 2:6-8). It is here where Job's faith is strengthened. Job's wife tells him

that he ought to give up; that he should just *"curse God, and die"* (Job 2:9). *"But [Job] said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips"* (Job 2:10).

Through his own circumstances, Paul knew that suffering and adversity strengthened faith: *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong"* (2 Cor. 12:10). Suffering begets spiritual growth; increased faith begets spiritual worship.

Suffering makes us like Christ. Through God's providence every situation and circumstance we encounter is used by God in conforming us into the image of His beloved Son: *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did*

foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:28-29). Though it would not be the only thing in those circumstances, suffering would certainly be included in *"all things"* working together. As Christ was always pleasing to the Father (Jn. 8:29), we become increasingly pleasing to the Father, worshipping Him by faith in the midst of our trials, knowing that these trials are making us more like Christ (see Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 4:10, et al).

Suffering brings us fellowship with Christ's sufferings. As we are being both strengthened in faith and conformed to the image of Christ through our sufferings, we are able to worship in spirit more intimately because our sufferings help us to more appropriately and intimately identify with Christ's sufferings. God's desire for us is that we *"may know [Christ], and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death"* (Phil. 3:10).



Jon Cardwell is pastor of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Anniston, Alabama and vice-chairman of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship.

Peter tells us, “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*” (1 Pet. 2:21). Though our sufferings could never come close to the infinite and eternal glory of Christ’s sufferings, when we do suffer, because Christ has suffered, our sufferings, by faith, should secure our hearts to Calvary’s cross. We can worship God in spirit through our sufferings because we are brought by the Spirit to “*know... the fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings*” (Phil. 3:10) since we are “*crucified with Christ*” (Gal. 2:20) and “*planted together in the likeness of his death*” (Rom. 6:5). Because of the reality of our salvation through the atoning death of Christ, our sufferings bring us a more intimate, supernatural fellowship with the sufferings of Christ in His atoning death. Our suffering, by faith, makes His death more real to our souls, and thus, when we worship God in spirit, our worship springs forth from the greatest truth in the universe: Christ crucified.

Worship Hindered by Suffering

Though saved by God’s grace, because we are descendents of fallen Adam, being “*carnal, sold under sin*” (Rom. 7:14), we may have a tendency at times toward sin. Therefore, in our suffering, our worship of God may be hindered in three ways: (1) through self-pity; (2) through self-righteousness; and (3) through self-vindication.

Self-pity. Upon hearing of his circumstances, three of Job’s friends went to him and sat with him in silence for seven days and nights (Job 2:11-13). Suddenly, Job speaks and wallows in self-pity (Job 3:1-26). In Job 3:2 he essentially says that it would have been better had he never been born.

Because Job was upright and feared God he worshipped the LORD twice after severe calamity struck. He maintained his integrity before God and before his friends for a whole week before he broke in an outburst of self-pity. When Job was alone, his attention was upon God alone; when his friends sat in his presence, however, sometime during that silence Job got distracted. When our eyes are upon Christ, His majesty abounds and we see ourselves as insignificant in the light of His glory (Psa. 8:4). When we get our eyes off of Christ, we tend to see ourselves as more important than we are. As if to say, “Why, oh, why, is this happening to *me*?”

Self-righteousness. As Job’s friends begin to speak, especially with particularly bad theology, Job’s self-pity gives way to self-righteousness. Job asks, “*Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?*” (Job 6:30). In other words he says, “Have I spoken sinfully? Don’t I know the difference between good and evil?”

Though it was true that these calamities did not come to Job because he did something especially evil, it is equally true that, apart from the grace of God, all his “*righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” (Isa. 64:6). When the sound of their erroneous philosophies came to Job’s ears, because he had already taken his eyes off of Jehovah, he could easily be lifted up in self-righteousness, thinking that he knew better than they. When we do not stand by faith upon God’s truth, we will tend to get puffed up by our own knowledge and in our own assessments (1 Cor. 8:1). As if to say, “I can’t believe that they could possibly think in that way.”

Self-vindication. After contending against the bad theology of his three friends, and after defending himself from their veiled

accusations, Job’s self-righteousness gave way to self-vindication; and it was evident to his friends that Job felt he was justified, vindicated in himself: “*So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes*” (Job 32:1).

This is the worst condition of the three because it minimizes at best, or removes at worse, the justification that comes from God alone. Sinful man cannot justify himself. Only God can justify: “*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth*” (Rom. 8:33); and justification specifically comes through the cross of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:23-27). Self-vindication would be as if to say, “Who do they think they are to say those kinds of things about *me*?”

Benefits of Worship through Suffering

There are three main benefits found in the worship of God through our sufferings: (1) consolation in Christ alone; (2) strength through God’s Word; and (3) service by the cross of Christ. Interestingly, the benefits of worship through suffering are also the prevention and prescription for this plague of “self” that hinders true spiritual worship.

Consolation in Christ alone. Suffering allows us to worship God in spirit and in truth because our only consolation is in Christ alone, our Redeemer: “*For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ*” (2 Cor. 1:5). Christ is our comfort in suffering; yet, He is also the prevention and prescription for departing into the ways that hinder worship and indulge self. Job uttered this truth of Christ, for it is upon our Redeemer we must cling: “*For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth*” (Job 19:25).

Strength through God’s Word. Suffering drives us to find strength from God’s Word to endure all we are going through. As we worship God in the midst of our sufferings, we are strengthened because the assurance of our faith is in God’s eternal and steadfast decrees, not in our situations and circumstances. Job declares, “*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear*” (Job 42:5); for “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). Our circumstances may change for better or worse, “*but [Christ’s] words shall not pass away*” (Mt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33).

Service by the cross of Christ. Our sufferings bring us a greater revelation of the cross of Jesus Christ. In Job’s reconciliation by God in the revelation of God at the end of his sufferings, Job worshipped God by saying, “*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee*” (Job 42:5). Though Job’s time was before the “fullness of the time” when Jesus Christ would come and die upon the cross; nevertheless, Job’s restoration by God foreshadows our reconciliation with God through the atoning death of Christ. Because of the reality of the cross of Christ, the forgiveness of sins we receive and the reconciliation with God we have, we may intercede for others just as Christ interceded for us when He hung upon that tree, saying, “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*” (Lk. 23:34); and as He continues, even now, to intercede from heaven (Heb. 7:25). God commanded Job’s three friends to have Job intercede in prayer and sacrifice. Job becomes the mediator between God and his friends, the very desire he had for himself in Job 16:21. As we suffer, we can see the cross more clearly, minister more compassionately, and endure more joyfully.

“Our very lives are instruments of worship unto God.” -Jon Cardwell

DAVID AND WORSHIP

BY LARRY DEAN

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish..
Psalm 1

David was without a doubt the greatest worship leader and hymn writer that the world has ever known. Of all of them, he is the only one of whom it is said the he was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

No one can read the Psalms without recognizing that this was a man who 'panted after God' (Ps. 42:1) and at the same time was completely devoted to the Word of God (the Law of God, Ps. 119) in its entirety. Never have the people of God held in their hands a hymnal other than this one that is completely the 'breathed out' Word of God. Never has there been a book of worship that so powerfully and effectively proclaimed the Glory, Righteousness, Mercy, Grace and Beauty of God. None has so truthfully declared the sinfulness of man and his complete dependence upon the Work of God in his life. And never has there been such a beautiful, elegant and complete answer from the heart of man to the Grace and Mercy of God. And...whose words does Jesus Himself quote from the cross?

I am continually amazed that the church has allowed herself to be persuaded to replace this glorious hymnal with the decidedly inferior concoctions of men. Ah...but that is a discussion for another time, isn't it?

I want you to see something of the essence of worship as defined by David and then reflect on the approach of many to the subject.

David instructs us concerning worship.

A. David begins this grand and noblest of all books of worship with the words, 'Blessed is the man.'

Why would he do that? I think that the answer lies in the nature of worship itself. Worship, in the mind of David, begins in the heart of the individual who sees, understands, fully grasps, and embraces the realization that he is and has been blessed by God.

Worship is the answer of the heart of a true saint of God to the God Who is the object of his total and complete devotion. It is an activity that begins in the heart of a person whose whole perspective of life has been changed by the regenerating power of God, which has brought him to the place of True Faith, which always includes True Repentance.

We might say that no one can worship other than this man. Who worships in truth who is not blessed by God? For what and in what context does he offer worship to God? What sense does he have of the Nature of God if he has not experienced His blessing?

B. And who is the man who is blessed?

Who actually ascends up the 'hill of the Lord' to 'stand in His holy place'?

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." (Psalm 24:4-5)

The phrase 'he shall receive the blessing..' is intended to be exclusive, 'he and he alone,' is the sense. David affirms this understanding as his intent in the first psalm. The 'blessed' man is the one who has distanced himself from all wickedness and refuses to identify himself with the wicked.

He does not 'walk,' does not conduct his life or order his path according to ungodly counsel. Instead his 'delight' is in the Law of God. He walks in obedience to the Law of God, refusing all contrary counsel regardless of its source.

He does not identify himself by 'standing in the (same) way' as the wicked, those who rebel against God. He has removed himself from their company, standing instead on a firm place that God has provided him.



LARRY DEAN IS THE PASTOR OF BRIDGETOWN BAPTIST CHURCH OF NESBIT, MISSISSIPPI; MISSIONS EDITOR OF THE SOVEREIGN GRACE MESSENGER; AND SECRETARY OF THE SOVEREIGN GRACE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP.

"I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." (Psalm 40:1-2)

He 'stands' upon the 'rock' and his 'goings' are established by God. Therefore, he cannot 'stand' in the same place as sinners and identify himself among them.

And he does not 'sit' with the 'scornful,' those who mock, scoff at and resist the Word of God.

This person alone is 'blessed' by God in the way that David intends. He has heard the call of God to repentance and has responded in real faith.

C. And in what way is he 'blessed'?

He is rescued from the awful pit of his sins. He has been given a right standing with God. His life, his 'goings' have been 'established' by God. He now walks in obedience to God. He has seen himself for who he is and he has seen God for Who He is.

A person cannot have been so rescued and not know it. And only the deviant could be rescued, know it, and not be appreciative, thankful, wholly devoted to the One Who has rescued him. So, this person is not only blessed for having been forgiven and reconciled to God, he experiences the blessedness of it.

He is both objectively and subjectively blessed. And he is the only kind of person who is. Think about it. The person who has not been blessed in this way cannot have the perception of it. So long as he remains in his sins, he remains under the curse and judgment of God.

Only insanity or profound deception could induce him to believe that he is blessed when he is not. On the other side, he who has no sense of blessing probably has not been rescued.

There are only two kinds of people in this world; the 'blessed' man of v.1 and the 'ungodly' of v.4. He who is not described in v.1 is 'ungodly' and, so, has no blessing from God and no basis for worship. Anything that he might do that he would call 'worship' is only a sham and a pretense for he has no respect for, fear of, nor devotion to the Lord of Glory.

The blessed man has been visited by the Spirit of God, has believed on God's Messiah, has repented of his sins, has been established by the mercies of God, and knows fully what it means to be 'blessed.'

D. And, from here he worships God.

David said, Ps 40:3, "And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God..." Worships originates with God, as do all spiritually valuable things, is processed through the heart of the regenerate soul, and returns to God as acceptable worship.

As such it is closely regulated, directed, energized and communicated to God by the Spirit of God.

And how does this man worship God?

A. What words does he choose?

So much as possible, he chooses words which reflect, in a biblical way, the glory of God, the wickedness of man, the glory of redemption in Jesus Christ and the man's response in broken, devout, and intense repentance.

If the 'gospel of the kingdom' is 'repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' then the worship of the true saint must be in accordance with his own embracing of that doctrine both in belief and in communion with God.

B. What is the state of his soul as he approaches God?

Isaiah, I believe, captured the moment of true worship in his description of his encounter with God in ch.6. He saw God, was devastated by both the glory of God and his own wickedness, confessed his wickedness and then threw himself without reservation into a full-hearted commitment to carry the word of God to his lost nation.

True worship always has awe associated with it; awe toward the magnificence of God, His incredible mercy, His amazing provision, and the man's own sinfulness. The contrast and interplay of those elements overwhelm the soul, confound the mind, crush the pride and arrogance of man and leave him softly and profoundly overwhelmed by the enormity of it all.

I would dare to say that nothing else is worship. The repetition of memorized words to memorized tunes that constitutes much of what is considered 'traditional' worship violates these principles as profoundly as any aberrant forms that we might imagine or oppose.

I believe that the time has come for all Christians, no matter in what language or with what 'style' they suppose themselves to 'worship,' to re-examine the whole concept and reform their practices to those taught us in the Word of God. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the *true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth*: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and *they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*." (John 4:23-24, emphasis mine)

C. What guides his choices of music to accompany his worship?

It is certain that we cannot pinpoint the single style of music of which God would approve. Different cultures and different times have made varying choices. That being said, this does not establish a principle that any style of music can be made appropriate to worship.

The music itself should reflect the state of worship that I described above. That which originates in barrooms and brothels is hardly suited either to the state of mind or the words by which we would approach God. I would offer the opinion (developed over many years of seeking God in prayer and worship) that it is doubtful that music styles developed by those who revel in immorality and perversion can be successfully adapted to true worship either.

**"I believe that the time has come for all Christians, no matter in what language or with what 'style' they suppose themselves to 'worship,' to re-examine the whole concept and reform their practices to those taught us in the Word of God."
- Larry Dean**

The 'blessed' man of this introduction to David's book of worship makes a complete break with all wickedness, refusing to identify himself with the wicked in any way. I seriously doubt that such a one would choose their music style to worship God

D. Finally, how does he couple together his state of worship, his words and his music?

Such a person, by definition, approaches God carefully, solemnly, concerned to the very depths of his soul that he might utter something or use some manner of communicating with God that would be disapproved by Him.

He is, on the one hand, dumbfounded and awestruck by God's great mercy in Jesus Christ and, on the other, terrified of Him with Godly fear. As he seeks to join together heart, word, and music these elements will cause him to carefully craft an approach that he has some hope that God would accept. God is indeed a God of Mercy, but He is not to be approached in a casual or disrespectful way.

I say again, the modern church should carefully re-consider its worship and seek to reform it until it actually is *worship*, not merely a style or form that it has chosen. This is much more difficult than simply dividing the congregation and hosting 'traditional' worship for some and 'contemporary' worship for others. It may, in all honesty, be that neither of them is actual worship.

Conclusion: Is it, then, possible that music crafted by professional musicians, performed with an eye to remuneration,

fashioned to appeal to the baser nature of man, designed to offend nothing in the modern evangelical church, I say, is it possible that such music can possibly be a part of the 'blessed' man's worship?

As you might suspect from what I have said, I have my doubts. But my doubts do not only concern 'contemporary' music, they extend to much of what we consider 'traditional' worship as well.

My intent is not to 'bash' modern Christian music. But the issue of it raises serious concerns to many of us concerning the true nature of worship. We must worship God as that 'blessed' man of whom David spoke. We must forever refuse to be drawn into any system that is contrary to the principles of Godly worship found in Scripture.

WHY MUST WORSHIP BE SPIRITUAL?

CHARLES H. SPURGEON

Why did not God ordain worship by windmills as in Tibet? Why has he not chosen to be worshipped by particular men in purple and fine linen, acting gracefully as in Roman and Anglican churches? Why not? He gives two reasons which ought to suffice.

The first is, *he himself seeks spiritual worship*. It is his own wish that the worship should be spiritual, And in the second place, he is himself a spirit, and is to be spiritually worshipped. Whatever kind of worship the great Ruler desires he ought to receive, and it is impertinence on my part if I say to him, "No, not that, but this." It is true I may say, "I am very sincere in all this, very earnest in it. It suits my taste. There is a beauty about it; it excites certain emotions which I think to be devotional." What is all that but saying, "Great God, thou hast chosen such-and-such a way of being worshipped, but I will not render it to thee?" Is not that in effect saying, "I will not worship thee at all;" for must not worship, to be worship, be such as the person worshipped himself will accept? To invent our own forms of worship is to insult God; and every mass that is ever offered upon the Romish altar is an insult to heaven, and a blasphemy to God who is a Spirit. Every time any form of worship by procession, celebration, or ceremonial of man's invention is offered to God, it is offered in defiance of this word of Christ, and cannot and will not be received; however earnest people may be they have violated the imperative canon of God's Word; and in fighting for rubrics they have gone against the eternal rubric that God as a Spirit must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

The second reason given is, that *God is a Spirit*. If God were material, it might be right to worship him with material substances; if God were like to ourselves, it might be well for us to give a sacrifice congenial to humanity; but being as he is, pure spirit, he must be worshipped in spirit. I like the remark made by Trapp in his commentary on this passage, when he says that perhaps the Savior is even here bringing down God to our comprehension; "for," saith he, "God is above all notion, all name." Certainly, this we know, that anything which associates him with the grossness of materialism is infinitely removed from the truth. Said Augustine, "When I am not asked what God is, I think I know, but when I try to answer that question, I find I know nothing." If the Eternal were such an one as thou art, O man, he might be pleased with thy painted windows. But what a child's toy must coloured glass be to God! I can sit and gaze upon a cathedral with all its magnificence of architecture, and think what a wonderful exhibition of human skill; but what must that be to God, who piles the heavens, who digs the foundation of the deep, who leads Arcturus with his sons? Why, it must be to him the veriest trifle, a mere heap of stones. I delight to hear the swell of organs, the harmony of sweet voices, the Gregorian chant, but what is this artistic sound to him more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal? As a sight, I admire the choristers and priests, and the whole show of a grand ceremonial; but do you believe that God is imposed upon by those frocks and gowns of white, and blue, and scarlet, and fine linen? It seems to me as if such a notion brings down God to the level of a silly woman who is fond of finery. The infinite God, who spreads out the heavens and scatters stars with both his hands, whom heaven and earth cannot contain, to whom space is but a speck, and time is as nothing, do you think that he dwelleth in temples made with hands, that is to say, of man's building? And is he to be worshipped with your organs, and your roodscreens, and your gaudy millinery? He laugheth at them, he treadeth on them as being less than nothing and vanity. Spiritual worship is what he regardeth, because he is a Spirit. My brethren, if you could get together a procession of worlds, if you could make the stars walk along the streets of some great new Jerusalem, dressed in their brightest array; if instead of the songs of a few boys or men you could catch the sonnets of eternal ages; if instead of a few men to officiate as priests you could enlist time, eternity, heaven and earth to be the priesthood, yet all this would be to him but as a company of grasshoppers, and he would take up the whole as a very little thing. But let me tell you that even God himself, great as he is, does not despise the tear that drops from a repentant eye, nor does he neglect the sigh that comes from a sinner's soul. He thinks more of your repentance than of your incense, and more of your prayers than of your priesthoods. He views with pleasure your love and your faith, for these are spiritual things in which he can take delight; but your architecture, your music and your fine arts, though they lavish their treasures at his feet, are less than nothing and vanity. Ye know not what spirit ye are of. If ye think to worship my God with all these inventions of man, ye dream like fools. I feel glowing within me the old iconoclastic spirit. Would God we had men now like Knox or Luther, who with holy indignation would pull in pieces those wicked mockeries of the Most High, against which our soul feels a hallowed indignation as we think of his loftiness, and of that poor paltry stuff with which men degrade his name.

EDITORIAL: “STRANGE FIRE”

RON STALEY

It was just a week after the priests had been consecrated to their office. Their duty was to offer sacrifices exactly as Jehovah had commanded. A grand promise was attached to the performance of the duty, the first offerings setting the standard that was never to be altered with the passing of time. “*This is the thing which the LORD commanded that ye should do: and the glory of the Lord shall appear unto you,*” said Moses (Leviticus 9:6). All was done in the fear of God exactly as had been commanded, Jehovah showing His approval by consuming the burnt offering with a supernatural fire. (Leviticus 9:24) Jehovah would be approached and worshipped only in the way He prescribed. Burning coals were to be taken from the altar of sacrifice to fire the sweet incense in the censers of the priests, the representatives of the people.

The Old Covenant has now passed; the one eternal sacrifice for sin, ending all Old Covenant sacrifices, has been offered. The distinction between priest and people is forever over, and the New Covenant order of priests, all who are regenerated unto a saving faith in Jesus Christ, is now in place (1 Peter 2:9). Our acceptable approach to God is only and always through “*Jesus Christ and Him crucified,*” and the only fire that should be kindled in our spiritual censers and sent up to heaven is that taken from the one and only altar that God has given to His believing children.

No sooner had the first Old Covenant sacrifices been offered than two of the priests – Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu – decided to kindle their own fire. Obviously, the fire they had kindled and put in their censers was taken from some source other than the altar of sacrifice. For whatever reason, they offered “*strange fire.*” What was the sin of these young men, a sin that merited their being consumed by the same supernatural fire that had consumed the sacrifice? (Leviticus 10:2) Many conjectures have been made, but it seems to me the only answer that gives meaning is found in the words, “*strange fire.*” The fire was wrong because it was of their making, coming from some other source than the altar of sacrifice. They dared to offer “*strange fire before the LORD, which He commanded them not.*” (Leviticus 10:1b) It was the responsibility of the priests to show the distinction between the holy and unholy, the sacred and the common. Had this sin been let go, had not divine justice immediately taken its holy vengeance on these two rash priests, what seeds would have been sown to quickly mix the sacred and the common, the holy and the profane? “*I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified,*” said Jehovah. (Leviticus 10:3)

I fear that much of what passes for 'worship' today is nothing more than strange fire drawn from methods adopted by the profane world. The slogan “If it works, let's try it” seems to govern the desire of many churches for numerical growth. In many such cases, pragmatism has replaced the principles and practices that should be drawn from the Word of God alone. The enduring of sound doctrine, the serious, thorough, consistent declaration and exposition of the one saving gospel of the grace of God, the time-consuming work of “*warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*” (Colossians 1:28), is exchanged for musical entertainment, skits, plays, ear tickling issue-based preaching, etc. Because men are 'bored' with the “*old paths*” established through the apostles, new paths – paths used successfully by the world – are explored in

order to keep the people content. Churches once sound in faith, even some claiming to hold to “the doctrines of grace,” have adopted the practices first arising in churches that have long apostatized.

God “*desireth truth in the inward parts.*” (Psalm 51:6) True worshippers of God, says our Lord, “*must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*” (John 4:24) It is the mind, the heart, and the understanding that must be engaged in true worship. And preaching is the method God chose to instruct the mind, heart and understanding: for “*it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*” (1 Co.1:21) The charge is not to entertain, appeal to man's ascetic nature by arts, skillfully executed musical forms, much less the type that impacts the senses to the point of bodily swaying and gyrations, but to “*preach the Word.*” Sensuality is often deceptively mistaken for spirituality. God has given us the gift of music and it is blessed when, in its 'melodious' sense, it aids us in our singing hymns and praises to God. But when musical forms adopted by the world in its profane rebellion against God are brought into the church, the music itself is to delight the senses. And as long as there are those who “*love to have it so*” they will be quite content to believe what agrees with their desires, even if it involves a distortion of historical fact.

One such distortion is a misrepresentation of Martin Luther, as Peter Masters wrote: “Luther was a composer himself, and also an adapter of other works. We read in Robert Harrell's work, *Martin Luther: His Music, His Message*, that Luther wrote thirty-seven chorales, fifteen of which he composed himself, and thirteen being derived from existing Catholic church music. Four were taken from German religious folk songs. Only one out of the thirty-seven came from a secular folk song. This hardly justifies the idea that Luther helped himself to secular sources. In the case of the one item drawn from a secular folk song, it is argued that the secular world had stolen that melody from the church, and Luther merely reclaimed it (having adapted and sanitised it).

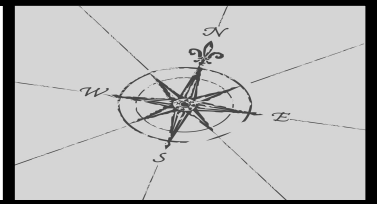
Promoters of new worship love to quote Luther as saying, ‘Why should the devil have all the good tunes?’ What they do not tell their hearers is that Luther was talking about Catholic church music, not tavern songs. He was not interested in stealing from the world around him. If, rarely, a secular melody was used, it was very greatly changed, and what else would we expect from the Reformer who wrote – ‘Take special care to shun perverted minds who prostitute this lovely gift of nature and of art with their erotic rantings. And be quite assured that none but the devil goads them on to defy their very nature . . . They purloin the gift of God and use it to worship the foe of God.’”

It is not our performances, works, gifts, or anything else that are pleasing to God. It is only as He sees us in Christ, who made the only “*offering and sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour,*” and only as all of our service comes through the Word-informed knowledge and understanding of Him that our worship is accepted. Let us be careful that the hymns we sing are in accord with the truth that is Christ and is revealed in Holy Scripture, designed to kindle our hearts with knowledge and understanding and not give precedence to the delight of our senses. Let us be careful that all of our worship and service comes by having our censers fired from the only altar we now have, the one eternal sacrifice of our Lord.

¹ From *Worship in the Melting Pot*, chapter III, pages 38 & 39, written by Dr. Peter Masters and published in England in 2002.



World Missions



THE ISSUES OF WORSHIP IN THE PHILIPPINES

Brian Ellis

For over 300 years the Philippines was dominated by Spain and was a closed Roman Catholic nation. It was named after Philip II of Spain who sent his Armada against the English to take back the country for Rome following the death of his wife “Bloody Mary,” Mary Tudor.

In 1898 during the Spanish American war the Philippines was taken by the United States and became a US colony. Now for the first time the gospel was preached openly in the islands and the main-line denominations sent in missionaries to establish churches. Sadly this was the era of great downgrade in those denominations where unbelief and heresy flooded into those churches and soon affected such missionary work in the Philippines. However there were missionaries who sought to proclaim the true gospel of salvation by grace through Christ alone and who sought to uphold the veracity of the Scriptures.

The Philippines, being a colony of the USA, adopted the English language as the main means of higher education. Since the end of the Second World War it has been an independent nation but looks constantly to the USA whose culture greatly affects this nation for good or ill.

The occupation of the Philippines by the Japanese during World War II brought about a great change in missions. During the liberation of the islands from the Japanese there were many American troops in the country. Some of these were Christians and following their return to the States there was an interest in missions among many. Some Christian GIs went to Bible School and Seminary and then returned to the Philippines as missionaries. The Philippines today has a large number of missionaries, the vast majority being from the US.

The Philippines is still a predominantly Roman Catholic nation. Much of the present evangelicalism came following the war and has predominantly been “fundamentalist and dispensational,” although that is beginning to change. Usually we find what ever the “in thing” is in the States among evangelical churches almost immediately is brought to the Philippines. Some will remember “the prayer of Jabez” and more recently Rick Warren and his “Purpose Driven Life.” This book was printed locally and was declared to be the great answer. Thousands were distributed.

Worship has also followed the same predominate pattern in the States— that of Contemporary Christian Music with its band complete with drum set and electric guitars to lead the half hour or so of “singspiration” at the beginning of the worship service.

We find “seeker sensitive services” abounding. “Worship” for so many is half an hour of hand waving and singing to a band at the front of the platform. It may even include dancers with tambourines. One reformed pastor friend of mine who was invited to speak at a church hardly knew what to do as he had to follow the dancing girls in their miniskirts with their tambourines.

Worship for many has deteriorated to repetitive choruses and “gospel songs” sung over and over again. The preaching of the Word tends to take second or even third place. Superficiality abounds in many churches. Yet there are good preachers in some quarters in spite of the entertainment.

We are Reformed Baptists and hold the “Regulative Principle of Scripture,” that is that our worship is to be directed by one thing only and that is the Scriptures. We believe that the worship of the Temple with its centre on the sacrificial system pointed forward to Christ the one sacrifice for sins never to be repeated. The worship of the Old Testament was replaced in Christian circles by the worship of the Synagogue which focused on the reading and exposition of the Scriptures. The singers, dancers, cymbals and musical instruments of the Old Testament are replaced by the simple worship of the New Testament.

However, in Reformed Baptist circles and some Fundamentalist churches the Word of God still is central to the whole of worship and for this we thank the Lord. May we seek to continue to be faithful to the Word of God and not to be swayed by the desires of men to attract the world by worldly methods.



Brian Ellis
55 Miami St., Cubao,
1102 Quezon City,
Philippines
Tel: +(632)-912-3992
Fax: +(632)-912-4485
brian@cubaorbc.org
www.CubaoRBC.org

Prem Waghmare

As many of you are aware, Bro. Prem has been held up in India by a false charge against him concerning a traffic accident. He cannot leave for a return home to the USA until the matter is resolved. The legal system in India can be quite convoluted, slow, and at times, even corrupt. During this time, however, the Lord has been opening doors of opportunity for him to minister both to the people there and to the brethren who labor with him.

Just this last month we received a report that has us greatly concerned from Roger Fielder. "On May 18th, Prem and two brothers were returning to Nagpur from an especially blessed visit to a village, people hungry for the Word of God and not wanting them to leave. On the way back, three drunk young men on a motorcycle ran into Prem's vehicle. One was killed instantly and the other two are in serious condition. Prem tells me that the usual "Indian way" is

to fault the largest vehicle--in this case his. The police have acknowledged the strong smell of alcohol on the three and there seem to be witnesses to their heavy drinking. But given the crazy ongoing previous situation, this is a blow and of deep concern."

The Lord obviously has a reason to keep Prem in India. Pray for him that God will grant him contentment with his situation. (He reports that the electricity is often off and the temperatures have been 116 to 118 degrees.) And pray that God will use him in accordance with His will.

.....
Prem Waghmare in India
International Community Outreach
PO Box 9424, Kansas City, MO 64133-0224
Email: **prem1@yahoo.com**
Phone in India: +91-942-180-4920
.....

Trevor and Teresa in Indonesia

Trevor recently returned to the mission field after a Sabbatical. On his first visit inland to the village where his house is located, he was stricken with a combination of illnesses. Teresa and the children have also been ill. The following is a brief update.

"The biggest news is my lingering dengue fever. I also had a parasite and malaria at the same time - heavy stuff to be hit with. I am weak and Jimmy Weyato, the Dani evangelist/teacher whom we work closely with, is fulfilling most ministry meetings for me (God bless him, he is a solid guy). He is meeting with about 60 Dani highland churches in about 30 days.

Update on the Fuau tribe (not in the letter): "When I got into Sentani (before my relapse) I met with Yulianus and he hugged me and literally jumped up in down with tears in his eyes as he showed me the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark translated into the Fuau language. Many years of labor are to follow, but it is a joyous thing to see a start to it. Two Mamberamo guys are in Jakarta now receiving linguistics training (thanks to your funds) and 8 other Fuau people are being helped through Bible schools, etc, through the Fuau Scholarship fund."

Other updates and pictures are in the latest newsletter; if you have not received one, email Trevor at oct31st1517@hotmail.com or myself at larrywdean@aol.com for a copy.

Prayer and Contact Information for Other Missions

Dr. Bob Doom and Global Baptist Mission
Russian Bible Society, Director
PO Box 6068
Asheville, NC 28816
Phone: (800) 253-8896

Bill and Jennifer Hale in Cambodia
First Baptist Church
5304 East Parker Road
Parker, TX 75002

Website: www.thechurchofmercy.org

Paul Karstens in South Africa
paulrkarstens@gmail.com
Gifts channeled from the U.S. through:
Grace Baptist Church
510 Susquehanna Ave.
Milton, PA 17847

Gospel Light Foundation for the Blind, Inc.
3760 Village Main Street
Loganville, GA 30052
Email: ministries@glfb.org
Website: glfb.org

Danny Roten

Website: www.sherwoodbaptist.com/missions/roten/news.php
Email: dan@sherwoodbaptist.com

Pat Horner in India
Raleigh Springs Baptist Church
PO Box 34788
Bartlett, TN 38184

Email: gracemissionary@gracetoasia.com

Joel Saripalli in India

Evangelical Church of Fairport, 38 E. Church Street, Fairport, NY 14450

Field Address: Joel Saripalli, Plot 99, Road 2,
Mathuranagar Colony, Secunderabad—56, AP, India

Gifts: Joel Saripalli, 135 Cedar Lane, Dodson, LA 71422
Email: joelsaripalli@msn.com

Kyle White, in support of struggling churches in Siberia
Community Baptist Church
5697 Labus Rd. #1
Elmendorf, TX 78112
Email: cbelder@cbcweb.net
Phone: (210) 723-6568

Paul Snider

We praise God that Paul and Trish are nearing the goal of complete funding for their ministry. His latest report:

“Trish is healing well after her surgery 2 weeks ago. Every day is a better day for her. My studies have been very time consuming lately, and we leave this Saturday for SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) at UND. We will be there for the whole summer and then will move to NC for CIT(Cross Cultural Training) in the fall. Also I have been traveling...went to PA, Canada, and Chicago this past month, so the Lord has been kind to us during all of our endeavors.

“We are right at the 80% mark, and I want to continue to travel if the Lord permits this summer and fall. Also I have some opportunities to speak at some colleges this year to mobilize for workers to Indonesia. Larry, I am still amazed that God would choose me and then allow me the privilege to serve Him in Indonesia, and have the opportunity to recruit for more workers that want to go into missions.

“My prayer has been that God would send out more laborers into His harvest, and that He would use me in anyway He sees fit to use. We are looking at this next summer to leave, all of our training will be complete.”

Paul and Trish Snider
smile0979@aol.com
paul.snider@worldteam.org
Bethany Bible Church
511 Eagle Lake Rd.
Big Lake, MN 55309

Victor Maxson – Malawi, Africa

The Maxsons recently rejoiced to find out that they are expecting a third child. Victor also writes:

On April 28th I had a blessed opportunity to share the gospel with some students at St. Patrick’s Academy, a high school in Blantyre, with a video presentation and a book table. We want to be more involved in evangelism and discipleship in schools around us. Please pray for this ministry to students!

God has granted me many opportunities for ministry lately. Please pray for the following:

1. Teaching Sunday mornings on God’s attributes from Paul Washer’s book *The One True God*.
2. Preaching at Evangelical Bible College of Malawi, May 10th.
3. All who will be teaching (including me) at the Leadership Training Seminar on May 15th.
4. Preaching at Blantyre Community Church on May 16th.

Pray that God may get glory through this weak and sinful vessel! You all mean so much to us as you hold the ropes for us! May God grant you grace to persevere!

Victor and Bethany Maxson
Faith Baptist Tabernacle
PO Drawer A
Williston, FL 32696
victorwmaxson@gmail.com

Daniel Parks – Frederiksted, Virgin Islands

Daniel reports that recently installed windows in his apartment have provided relief from the tropical heat. The Caribbean is experiencing a record drought which has sparked brush fires, shut down some schools and even provoked a prison riot.

Daniel Parks
PO Box 305,
Frederiksted, VI 00841
RedeemerBC@aol.com
Phone: (340) 772-6198

Recently Daniel has had opportunity to begin a television broadcast and reports:

“We are very encouraged by our recently commenced television ministry *We Preach Christ*. We received very little response to our former radio ministry with the same name, and not a single telephone call. However, after the first television broadcast, April 4, the producer of our broadcast, whose logo appears at the beginning of our broadcast, told me he received four telephone calls from viewers of the preceding broadcast, that of the local Free Will Baptist Church. They told him they usually turn off their television sets when that program ends, but decided to watch ours when they saw his logo. (He is a member of that church, and produces its broadcast.) After our broadcast May 2, I received a telephone call from two pastors, one on Saint Croix and another on the neighboring island Saint Thomas, who said they found the broadcast interesting. A neighbor across the street from me told he received a telephone call from one of his employees when our program began airing on the same date, who told him to quickly turn on his television set to watch our program. We therefore know we have an audience. We pray the Lord will open ears, eyes, and hearts (as in Acts 16:14) through these broadcasts of His gospel. We appreciate the free daily advertisement spots provided by the television station.”

He will be making a visit to the States from June 7 to July 10 and will be speaking in many of his supporting churches. Details of his visit may be obtained by emailing him at DanieleParks@aol.com.

If you know of sound, Sovereign Grace missionaries who would like to be included in our reports, please have them email details of their ministries to larrywdean@aol.com.

All Missions Updates as of June 1, 2010.

What are your general thoughts about worship?

Well, where do I begin? The basic principles of worship do not change cross-culturally: All Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world, in one sense, worship the same way, because there are basic elements of worship that we all practice – universal principles based on the Bible that are found wherever there are true Christians. The most important of these universal principles is that we bask in the presence of God and enjoy Him and do all we do to glorify Him. Worship, therefore, is centered upon the glory of God.

Though the elements of worship are the same for all Christians, the way/style of worship may vary within bounds and we should not mix up these basic principles, these universal principles, with a permissible variety of styles that we see within different tribes and language-groups.

OUR WAY:

Our worship in West Java consists of beginning with a request to God to come and be present among us. We pray for God to forgive us our sins and to focus our minds on Him alone and away from all distractions of the world. Then we pray that we, ourselves, would only pray for and do God's will alone and not merely try to pray for our own wills to be done, because we must humble ourselves under Him and cheerfully accept all that He sends our way.

Then, we have those in our church who are specifically gifted and we allow those people to exercise those gifts as the Spirit leads. If we believe that God is, in fact, present with us, then we must believe that God is leading our worship by His Spirit. And so we often have people give testimonies, sing songs, utter words of thanks, and give us words from Scripture that they feel particularly impressed to bless us with. We also pray for the sick and we end this time with more structured prayer after everyone has prayed or testified as they have felt led.

Ha, ha, sometimes this time of testimony has been as long as the sermon because many desire to speak about how God has healed them or blessed them or caused their family members to believe. Also, because some have tearfully explained about the latest experience of persecution as they have been rejected by family. Sometimes this is a time in which we cry together, too. I have cried, too, and I am not a woman.

Then we read the Scripture. We always include the Psalms in every worship service, and also usually the New Testament, though we do not follow a strict liturgy. Then we preach based upon a portion of Scripture and then pray for God's blessing on all we have done.

We worship sitting in a circle on a mat like it is normal for Sunda people to do. We always eat together afterwards and usually people stay all day at our house on Sundays.

THOUGHTS ON WORSHIP

AN INTERVIEW WITH (NAME REMOVED FOR SECURITY REASONS) IN INDONESIA

***TELEPHONE INTERVIEW ON MAY 14 2010,
TRANSCRIBED AND TRANSLATED (MY OWN
THOUGHTS ARE IN BRACKETS).***

[Note: Worship is done illegally in Nunu's garage. They are still an unregistered body (though in a friendly neighborhood). After service, the church body stays and fellowships at Nunu's house. Ibu Lena, Nunu's wife, and also evangelists Siti and Erni prepare the meal every Sunday].

About ways of worship and liturgies:

I have seen both traditional Presbyterian services and also Pentecostal and Charismatic services, and I think there are good and bad things about each.

The strict, traditional liturgy of the Presbyterians in Indonesia gives a good structure and a standard way of worship. But it chokes the life out of many churches and the people begin merely to follow the liturgy, almost in an automatic way as if asleep. It becomes merely ceremony. They are going through the motions (sit here, stand here, say this here). It often does not enter the heart. Plus, this way of worship neither fits with Scripture totally nor is it a good cultural fit as we try to reach the Sundanese people. Sunda people do not feel close to God in this way.

On the other hand, the Pentecostals and Charismatics are freer and more flexible, and this is a good thing, within bounds. Emotions are allowed, and indeed, true worship truly does make one feel deep emotions. True worship moves one powerfully. Many times Sunda people weep and cannot hold it back when they experience true worship for the first time. I have had tough guys weep at hearing me pray to God in the Sunda language, because they thought that they had to approach God only in the Arabic language using a set form and prayer. "You can pray to God in Sundanese?" they have asked. "Ya, of course, God doesn't merely know Arabic," I have replied. "He is God of the Sundanese too." At the annual Sundanese retreat, many have gotten up in joy and have begun to weep and spontaneously dance at hearing the Gospel for the first time. I cannot fault them.

However, it appears that for many of the Charismatics, emotion is the main thing. Also, many think that speaking in tongues is necessary as a proof that one is saved. This is false. I want to say that emotion or lack of emotion is not a proof of true worship; only whether or not a church is following the Bible. Go ahead and cry or not cry if you want. These things are not ultimate proofs.

About music:

I have seen churches that use no music at all in worship. It seems as if their worship is incomplete. The Bible seems to command us to sing joyfully and make songs to the Lord. How can our worship be complete without joyous singing to God, since the Bible commands such things and has many examples of such things? Music is one important tool that God gives to us by which we can help focus our thoughts and emotions on Him.

Every tongue and tribe possesses their own style of music; however, it is a shame when every tongue and tribe does not have songs to our

God in their own tongue. Part of our job as we spread the Gospel is to try to glorify God through songs within every culture and find musical forms that enter deeply into the hearts of the listeners so that they can understand, accept and glorify God as their own God. We must always try to use a people-group's "heart-language" in worship.

In many traditional churches in Indonesia, the people sing songs with European instrumentation and the songs themselves are translated from Dutch or English songs. This often cannot enter deeply into people's hearts, but, instead, proves to people that Christianity is "Agama Bule" (whitey's religion) and not our own. But the Lord can be glorified with the *gamelan* and *suling*, too. So we try to play Sundanese music, use Sundanese postures of prayer and Sundanese ways of seating in our meetings, and we wear Sundanese clothes. We know that God is our God, too, and not merely the God of the Bule.

In the cities, because of globalization, many Western songs have already become the heart-language of some city people. If those churches like Western songs, then go for it. But for the poor in the villages in which we focus, these songs are foreign to them. So we glorify God through Sundanese song, in a format by which the villagers can hear, accept, understand the Gospel, and be moved by its beauty. Understanding is only one part of it, we want people attracted and moved by the Gospel.

About the Health and Wealth Gospel:

The Health and Wealth Gospel contains a small grain of truth, and that is all.

When a person becomes a Christian, indeed, they are blessed. And if their way of life and their personality changes for the better, then, many times, the new believer can move forward in life. For instance, they improve their business principles and use their money more wisely. However, "Injil Kemakmuran tidak Alkitabiah." The Prosperity Gospel is not biblical. Many Charismatics pray for a *berkat* (blessing) and they primarily think of *berkat* as being a material blessing. They are focused on earthly things and only hope for earthly *berkat*. They have redefined the word "berkat" to be

primarily a worldly blessing!

Many who follow the *Injil Kemakmuran* believe that if they are healthy then God loves them and if they fall sick, then it is due to sin. "Ada dosa, ada dosa" (there is sin, there is sin) they say if someone is sick. But Rasul Paulus (The Apostle Paul) says that God afflicted him even though he asked three times to be well. And God gave Paul this thorn as a blessing.

Sickness makes us closer to God. Sickness makes us remember God. Sickness makes us depend upon God all the more. And besides, many of our new believers get persecuted once they believe. How does the Prosperity Gospel treat persecution?

What about Easy-Believism:

Huh? I don't really know what that is...?

But yes, indeed, if we truly desire salvation and truly pray for it, then our God is a gracious God who is pleased to receive sinners. So, I guess it easy to believe, in one sense (if you want to), because God quickly forgives our sins. He does not act begrudgingly towards us nor does He make us wait. He is pleased to receive us and heaven rejoices over all who repent.

[Note: In Nunu's defense, Easy-Believism is less common in a climate of persecution, where your church can get burned and you can be beaten and disowned by your family, as most of the team have been].

CONCLUSION: I just want to repeat that God's presence and His glory are the main things in worship. Sorry, I am not an educated man and I wish I could say something smarter.

END OF TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

The Situation in Thailand

There has recently been much internal upheaval in the little country of Thailand. Because it is an open and Western-friendly country, many missionaries work from there to reach the less accessible parts of Asia. Recently a number have become quite concerned for their safety as conflict has raged near them. They have heard the gunfire and seen the military vehicles in the streets.

A missionary friend sent the following list of concerns, asking for prayer for the region:

Pray for peace in Thailand, and for our brothers and sisters there. Here are some of the ways we have prayed for our brothers and sisters in Thailand over the last few days:

- Safety
- Act wisely; know when/if to leave
- Receive God's peace that is beyond understanding, and understand His goodness and sovereignty in a deeper way.
- Have no fear/reject it when necessary (our Father doesn't give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.)
- Be conduits of calm and ministers of God's peace to all around them, especially to the children
- Not hide own light/peace under a bushel, but extend it to others
- Actively seek out ways to be peace-makers, on a large or small scale: **"Blessed are the peace-makers, for they will be called the children of God!"**

Especially for the Ladies:

Quiet before the Lord

Carolyn Staley

As the children of God, the “daughters of Zion,” we have a glorious destiny that surpasses all we can ask or think. It transcends this earthly life and will eventually present us “*faultless before the presence of (God’s) glory with exceeding joy*” (Jude 24). God’s eternal purpose for us is that we be numbered among the “*spirits of just men made perfect*” (Hebrews 12:23). That we stand “*before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes,*” part of the innumerable multitude seen in Revelation 7:9! Conformed at last into the beautiful image of Christ, with all that was lost in Adam fully restored and every vestige of sin removed (Romans 8:28-30)!

Therefore, our eternal destiny is the highest and most glorious one there is. And yet, it is a thing not easily attained. We must be prepared and made fit for it. To this end, our heavenly Father undertakes the work of transforming us into vessels of honor – “*sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work*” (2 Timothy 2:21). This He does because we are His beloved ones, “*Vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory*” (Romans 9:23). We, who struggle so while here on earth, are destined for eternal glory! But the “*path*” that takes us there (Proverbs 4:18) is not an easy road.

Our Needful Preparation

Our heavenly Father has designed a course for each of us that will, in His time, achieve His purpose for us. But the ways in which He prepares us for our eternal inheritance often seem perplexing because they usually run contrary to our human reason. Since we do not understand our own human frailty, we fancy that we could serve our Lord best in circumstances that are relatively free from difficulty. But our infinitely wise heavenly Father knows us far better than we know ourselves. If we are to be purged of things that hinder us spiritually, we need adversity far more than we need ease. Therefore, our necessary preparation requires rigorous discipline, correction, and chastening – all of which will be a ‘bitter pill’ to the flesh and prove painful, at least in the short term (Hebrews 12:5-11).

In the course of our daily life, with its many duties and cares, we tend to lose sight of what lies ahead for us. As a result, we are likely to misinterpret God’s providence and murmur and complain when trouble comes our way. Furthermore, we may be tempted to think that He is dealing unfairly with us, or even go so far as to blame

Him for our troubles and question His love. It is a hard thing to admit, but we may perhaps even charge God foolishly, like Job’s wife did – and with far less provocation (Job 2:9-10). My friend, there is a far better way!

As we walk with the Lord and endeavor to serve Him with our whole hearts, many things will come our way that are mysterious and baffling. As William Cowper expressed it, the “smiling face” of God’s gracious design is often hidden behind what seems to us a “frowning providence.” Although we are at a loss to see it at the time, there is an eternal purpose of good concealed behind all of God’s dealings with us. His mercy attends every step of our journey through this life: designing our course, sustaining us through all of its difficulties, and bringing us safely to our journey’s end. But why must affliction figure so prominently in it all? Because a significant part of our preparation for eternal glory involves the trial of our faith!

“There is an eternal purpose of good concealed behind all of God’s dealings with us. His mercy attends every step of our journey through this life: designing our course, sustaining us through all of its difficulties, and bringing us safely to our journey’s end.”

~Carolyn Staley

The Secret of our Spiritual Progress and Perseverance in Grace

Saving faith is a precious thing and is of infinitely more value than pure gold. It is the inward principle by which we as believers in Christ overcome the world and finish our course with joy (1 Peter 1:5). Genuine faith is a living, vital thing – the principle of life that is to define and characterize our earthly walk. The divine imperative that “*the just shall live by faith*” is reiterated four times in Scripture: Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; and Hebrews 10:38. Since it is to be the believer’s principle of life, faith was never intended to be a static thing. It is designed to grow and become increasingly stronger. Moreover, as the apostle James makes abundantly clear, faith is not intended to remain alone. It will make its presence known by its practical effects in one’s life (James 1:22-25; James 2:14-26). And as the apostle Peter clearly states, genuine faith is the fountain from which every other Christian virtue flows (2 Peter 1:5-7). Wherever true faith exists, it will be attended by a proportionate growth in grace and the bearing of spiritual fruit (2 Peter 1:8-9; John 15:1-8). And in this, genuine faith may be distinguished from its counterfeit (Mark 4:2-20 2 Peter 1:9-11).

Even though faith is genuine, it must be tried in order to grow. It must operate and prevail in the face of great resistance. It must encounter and overcome opposition if it is to be strengthened. And in this way, faith will manifest what sort it is. The genuine article – and that alone – will stand the test when it is tried by fire. Since its origin is divine, saving faith is indestructible. Even so it must be

purged and purified, just like precious metal.

Gold does not shine brightly, nor does it attain its potential value, as long as it lies hidden in the earth. Since raw ore is alloyed with base metal and other useless substances, it is neither beautiful nor useful. Before the gold's full brilliance can be achieved, the raw ore must be subjected to the heat and stress of the refiner's fire. Its real beauty will be seen and its optimal value attained only after the impurities have been removed.

Since this same principle applies to saving faith, Scripture often uses the metaphor of the refining process to illustrate God's work in the hearts of His children (Proverbs 17:3; Malachi 3:2-3; 1 Peter 1:6-7). If we are going to attain the perfection for which we are destined, with the 'alloy' of sin removed, it will have to be 'through the fire.' Remember what God said in Isaiah 48:10: "*Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.*" This would be a very discouraging thought if we did not have the precious promise given in Isaiah 43:1-2: "*But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*"

The 'fire' with which God purifies His people is of a very peculiar sort. It has no harmful intention whatsoever, but is designed for our highest benefit. Therefore, it will never destroy us because it is carefully regulated by God's everlasting love, and its discipline is for the express purpose of making us partakers of His holiness. Contained within our Lord's great intercessory prayer is the assurance that not a single one of His people shall fail to attain his/her glorious destiny (John 17:17-24). Fiery trial cannot destroy genuine faith; it will only make it shine all the brighter!

The Anticipation of our Expected End

Those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ face a future that is bleak indeed – a future that is without hope (Ephesians 2:12). All their hopes and dreams center upon their lives in this world, even though Scripture warns, "*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.*" (Job 14:1). So, unbelievers have little hope in this world and no hope at all in the world to come.

But, as God's children, we have a "blessed hope" – an expected end, in spite of all the difficulty we may face in this life. This glorious promise is found in Jeremiah 29:11, where God says, "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*" Given against the backdrop of the Babylonian captivity, this promise was made to the small remnant that would be exiled for many years, but eventually return to the land of their fathers. Through it all, God was bringing His will to pass concerning them.

As the spiritual children of Abraham, we are heirs to the same promises given to the believing remnant among the nation Israel (Galatians 3:7). And the expected end that awaits us is the glorious destiny for which we, as 'pilgrims and strangers,' are now being prepared (Titus 2:11-14). What should our heart attitude be during our race to eternal glory, as we even now advance toward our expected end?

Quiet before the Lord: Our Proper Attitude of Heart

How can we be quiet before the Lord and have His promised peace when our hearts and minds are cluttered with earthly troubles and cares? We cannot! In Psalm 46:10, we are told to "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" Clearly implied here is that in order to know our Lord aright, we must be quiet before Him. We must have a **listening heart**! Only then can we hear the "still, small voice" of His Holy Spirit as He speaks to us in prayer and through His Word. And we need to make use of these means of grace early and often. To "*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 3:18) requires both a fixed resolve and diligent effort on our part. It requires a **seeking heart**!

In Jeremiah 24:7 God said, "*I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.*" The language here is of covenantal relationship; it refers to those who have been brought into the family of God by new birth. One will never seek the Lord in this way until he has a heart to know Him, a "**new heart**" given by God in regeneration (Ezekiel 36:26). But for those with hearts that hunger and thirst to know more of Him, great and precious promises are attached to the search. (Proverbs 8:17; Jeremiah 29:12-13; Luke 11:9-13)

How does the knowledge of God quieten our troubled minds and comfort our souls when under severe affliction? In and of itself, it cannot! Tranquility of soul in spite of adverse circumstances is only ours when knowledge is applied by faith. If we would know the peace of God within, we must have a **trusting heart** that finds its rest only in Him. In Isaiah 26:3-4, we have the blessed promise – "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.*" He is our stability, our Rock, our Deliverer, our "*refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*" (Psalm 46:1)

Like every other spiritual grace, this peace must be carefully maintained because many things will arise to war against it. Unbelief is the chief culprit here. There will be times when, like Israel of old, we feel trapped between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea! In such times, we need to remember the command of Moses – "*Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD*" (Exodus 14:13). This command does not denote inactivity, but the duty to actively trust the Lord and commit ourselves to Him, even while faithfully doing what He has given us to do. To trust and obey! To patiently wait upon Him and look to Him by faith, instead of leaning to our own understanding! To resist the urge to take matters into our own hands rather than following God's clear directive in His Word!

This same principle is seen in the dilemma of King Jehoshaphat, when Judah faced the combined forces of the Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites. His response was to seek God in prayer saying, "*We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.*" The Lord responded to his prayer of faith by saying, "*Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you*" (2 Chronicles 20:17). The outcome is given in 2 Chronicles 20:18-30.

While it is true that there are times when we should take action, there are other times when we should wait on the Lord. May He grant us the wisdom to discern between the two in any given situation!

Our Greatest Consolation when our Way Seems Dark and Life Is Hard

One verse in Scripture that I find particularly comforting is Psalm 103:19 – *“The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.”* But the knowledge of God’s sovereignty and power, in and of itself, brings little comfort when we *“are in heaviness through manifold temptations”* (1 Peter 1:6). However, when this knowledge is combined with the comprehension of His great love for us, it will speak peace to our hearts whatever may befall us. Even though we fail Him daily and come far short of His glory, His love for us never varies. It is infinite, unconditional, eternal and changeless:

- Jeremiah 31:3 – *“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”*
- Song of Solomon 2:4 – *“He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love.”*
- John 13:1 – *“Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”*

How could we ever doubt His love for us when He demonstrated it in the highest way possible? In John 15:13, our Lord told His disciples – *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* And now, our risen Lord intercedes for us and works mightily in our behalf. He guards us, protects us, and when all others forsake us, He is a *“friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”* When men betray us, He is ever Faithful and True. When all around us seems on the verge of imminent collapse, He is the Rock of Ages to whom we may cling for safety. When we are in the midst of fierce battle, He stands by our side as our strong arm and sure defense.

How often we forget our Savior’s assurance that *“the very hairs of (our) head are all numbered”!* His mercy overshadows each step we take and, if we could but lay hold of it, this is our greatest source of consolation and hope. Our entire lives are ordered by His providence for our highest good. His loving ‘eye’ watches over us and His powerful ‘hand’ guides and keeps us in the right path, which will eventually bring us to a glorious end. Therefore, it is our wisdom to bow to His will and providence when life is hard and the way before us is dark and perplexing. But to do so requires a **submissive heart!**

To be quiet before the Lord – to trust Him and submit to His will and providence when trouble comes – is one of the most difficult things we will ever do. But consider the alternative, which is to yield our hearts and minds to unbelieving fear. In the long run, that will prove far more difficult still!

The sin of unbelief is the root cause of all worry and anxious care. Therefore, it is the main robber of our spiritual peace and strength. Unbelief will argue vigorously against faith and thus hinder us from receiving comfort from the precious promises of God’s Word. How? By arguing that they do not apply to our particular case! And it will render us fearful of yielding ourselves to God, dreading what His

will might be. As if our failure to do so changed anything! As long as the sin of unbelief has the upper hand, our hearts will remain turbulent and fearful. We will never have the peace that passes understanding until we commit ourselves to God and rest in His care. (Matthew 6:24-34; Philippians 4:6-7)

Our safest course is to submit our will to God’s will. His way is best and so is His timing. We desire immediate deliverance when what we need is the patience of faith. God always leads His children in the right way, but it is seldom the easy way. How comforting to know that in the course of our preparation for eternal glory He *“will not break the bruised reed”* nor *“quench the smoking flax”!* His heart toward us is that of a loving Father who understands and pities our human frailty. So, with special regard to our weakness, He gathers us *“with His arm”* and carries us *“in His bosom”* when our steps falter and our strength fails (Isaiah 40:11).

- ◇ - ◇ - ◇ - ◇ - ◇ - ◇ - ◇ -

What is our proper response to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us? Heart-rendered worship! Moreover, a **worshipful heart** – a heart full of reverence and godly fear, humble submission to God, sincere gratitude to Him, and praise to His name – is to characterize every aspect of our lives. In King David, a man after God’s own heart, we find a pattern of what our worship ought to be. His psalms overflow with the spontaneous expressions of one who was a true worshipper of the living God. (Psalm 103 is a prime example)

David worshipped God *“in spirit and in truth,”* and not only when life was good and his circumstances favorable. In Psalm 34:1 he wrote, *“I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”* He sought the Lord fervently and worshipped Him in sincerity even when walking *“in the midst of trouble”* (Psalm 138:2,7). Genuine faith is the only basis for this kind of worship. By faith David could worship God in his affliction because he clearly understood its end result (Psalm 138:8). Therefore, he bowed to God’s sovereign purpose concerning him and committed himself to God’s mercy.

So did Job! In spite of overwhelming sorrow and bitter anguish, Job worshipped God and blessed His name (Job 1: 20-21). He endured severe affliction with exemplary patience and faith because, like David, he saw its end purpose. Thus he could say with conviction, *“Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him, he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold”* (Job 23:8-10).

May it be so with us as well!

When our journey to Zion seems long and difficult and our hearts are overwhelmed along the way, may we have the sight of faith to see beyond our present circumstances! We are advancing toward an eternal destiny that is more glorious than we can imagine. Can you perceive it yet? As Christian from the portal of the Palace Beautiful and later, from the heights of the Delectable Mountains, can you discern the light and glory of the Celestial City? One day our course will bring us to Beulah Land, at the very border of the heavenly Canaan. From that perspective, *“the things of earth will grow strangely dim,”* when compared to the *“glory that excelleth.”* (2 Corinthians 3:10)

The Lamb – the Lord Jesus Christ – is “all the glory of Emmanuel’s Land.” And when we see Him face to face, conformed at last into His image and likeness, we will share a measure of that glory. The trials of earth will seem as nothing then. All such things will fade into eternal obscurity “in the light of His glory and grace.”

In 1John 3:2, John wrote – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” A wonderful prospect to keep in mind during our ‘waiting time’!

Ω



Carolyn Staley lives and writes in Richmond, VA, and is the wife of Ren Staley, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Mechanicsville, a suburb of Richmond, VA.

“I BECFECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Romans 12:1

We now find what sacrifices Paul recommends to the Christian Church: for being reconciled to God through the one only true sacrifice of Christ, we are all through His grace made priests, in order that we may dedicate ourselves and all we have to the glory of God. No sacrifice of expiation is wanted; and no one can be set up, without casting a manifest reproach on the cross of Christ.

“Your reasonable service.”

This sentence, I think, was added, that he might more clearly apply and confirm the preceding exhortation, as though he had said,—“Offer yourselves a sacrifice to God, if ye have it in your heart to serve God: for His is the right way of serving God; from which, if any depart, they are but false worshippers.” If then only God is rightly worshipped, when we observe all things according to what He has prescribed, away then with all those devised modes of worship, which He justly abominates, since He values obedience more than sacrifice. Men are indeed pleased with their own inventions, which have an empty show of wisdom, as Paul says in another place; but we learn here what the celestial Judge declares in opposition to this by the mouth of Paul; for by calling that a reasonable service which He commands, He repudiates as foolish, insipid, and presumptuous, whatever we attempt beyond the rule of His Word.

— John Calvin



The Quilt Project began under the leadership of (name removed for security reasons) to help Indonesian women who lost the support of their Muslim families when they confessed faith in Christ. They make beautiful, high quality quilts (like the one shown here) that would normally sell at much higher prices in the U.S. Please consider supporting these converts by purchasing one of their fine hand-crafted pieces.

Information on quilt designs, sizes and pricing may be obtained by contacting Jeannie Henry in St. Louis, Missouri at (636) 677-6241 or emailing her at bbcinstl@aol.com.

This is a non-solicited and non-compensated announcement.

Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship



October 25-29, 2010

Annual Fall Sovereign Grace Bible Conference

Grace Baptist Church, West Milton, Pennsylvania

David King, pastor

Schedule of Services

The conference begins Monday evening, October 25, 2010 at 7:00 PM and continues through Friday morning, October 29, 2010. There will be two speakers in the morning sessions and two speakers in the evening sessions.

The morning sessions will begin at 10:00 AM. The evening sessions will begin at 7:00 PM.

Speakers

Gene Breed, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Jonesboro, Georgia. **Ron Carr**, pastor of Free Grace Baptist Church, Luray, Virginia. **Rodney Grey**, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Hummels Wharf, Pennsylvania. **Tom Henry**, assistant pastor of Bible Baptist Church, St. Louis, Missouri. **Barrett Holloway**, pastor of Cherith Baptist Church, Wedowee, Alabama. **Gary Scott**, pastor of New Hyde Baptist Church, New Hyde Park, New York. **Larry Scouten**, pastor of First Baptist Church, Wellsburg, New York. **Ron Staley**, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, Mechanicsville, Virginia.

Recommended Lodging

Comfort Inn, New Columbia, Pennsylvania (a short driving distance from the church building). Comfort Inn offers comfortable accommodations with a free deluxe breakfast included. Call early, ask for Caroloni, and mention Grace Baptist Conference to receive a special rate of \$55.00. Phone: (570) 568-8000

Meals Provided by Grace Baptist Church

Each day of the conference, an afternoon meal is provided by the church at a local restaurant for all who attend.

Pastor King and Grace Baptist Church invite all to attend. If you need any help to attend the conference, Pastor King urges you to contact him. For further information, contact Pastor King at: (570) 742-8915.

Check out the SGBF website: www.sovereigngracebaptistfellowship.org

If you are not on the mailing list and desire to receive *The Sovereign Grace Messenger*, add another recipient to the list, have a change of address, or would like your name removed, please send your name and address to:

The Sovereign Grace Messenger
c/o Ron Staley, editor
New Hope Baptist Church
5452 Spotslee Circle
Mechanicsville, VA 23111
(One copy per family please)

You may phone or email your name
and address to:

(804) 321-2110
ronstaley1@verizon.net

