David Alsobrook

True Worship



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John 4:23

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"There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou has well said, I have no husband: For thou has had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 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. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:7-26).

When Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman He stressed that worship should not be associated with a place as much as it should be connected with a Person. The way we are to worship that Person, Jesus taught her, is in spirit and in truth.

Jesus struck down the idea of conventional worship with a place when He said to her, *"Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."* That is to say, "the hour is coming when you are not going to associate worship with a mountain of Samaria or a city of Israel. You are not going to think of worship in connection with a geographical place, or with a building. You are simply going to worship the Father regardless of the physical surroundings."

"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." What truly matters is not *where* you worship, but *who* and *how* you worship Him.

As in the past, many people presently associate worship with a geographical location. One is often asked, "WHERE do you worship?" And expressions such as "I worship at such and such a church" are often heard. When confronted with her sin by divine revelation, the Samaritan woman turned to religion in her conversation with Christ in an attempt to sidestep the issue of personal sin. She, as many people will do today when under conviction for their sins, tried to begin an argument with a Jew on the right mountain at which to exercise worship. Her reply to Jesus' disclosure was, *"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.'* Often I've been told, "My parents raised me in the Baptist church; where do you attend church?"

No small wonder Jesus told her that she, as well as the rest of Samaria, did not know what they were worshipping! *"Ye worship ye know not what...."* How true that is of many denominations that claim the name of Jesus today. At the door of the building, one is handed a rundown of the events of the coming hour even to the closing prayer! She was correct in asserting that the Jews associated the city of Jerusalem with the PLACE men should worship. External formalism and outward correctness had replaced heart-felt sincerity in the worship of the unseen God in Israel. The general thought seemed to be, "Make sure you are in Jerusalem during the Feast Days." They did not know what they were worshipping, but it certainly was not God!

Centuries before, in Isaiah, God reproved the externalities of Israel's religious observances. Yahweh grieved, *" . . . this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me ..."* (Isaiah 29:13).

Similarly Amos said that Israel went to the house of God in order to sin! *"Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning ..."* (Amos 4:4).

Carnal Christians, if such a creature truly exists, do the same thing today as history repeats itself with attendance contests, social parties, and preachers who clown (or is it clowns who preach?). In a vain attempt to entertain the personality-conscious church crowd, how much true worship is offered to the invisible God in the charismatic/pentecostal realm? Our heavenly Father desires His children to worship Him in reality with hearts of sincere love and devotion to Him.

Our English word "worship" is actually a contracted form of an earlier word "worthship." Although the "th" has been dropped from the word due to its awkwardness of pronunciation, the beauty of the thought remains. Please ask yourself before reading further: "Do I show God His worth to me when I worship Him?" There are definite patterns of true worship revealed to us in the Word of God. As we yield to the Holy Spirit we receive power to worship God. Are you willing to yield your whole being to the Holy Spirit, to worship the Father in any form of praise the Scripture enjoins?

I am not speaking of the forms of men's vanity, but the forms or expressions to worship God which are found in His Word.

Jesus told the woman at the well to worship God in truth. Later in John's Gospel He prayed to the Father to sanctify the disciples with truth adding, *"... thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). We are to worship God according to the Bible pattern; not according to a form of godliness that denies the power of true godliness.

Twice Jesus affirmed that true worshippers worship "in spirit and in truth." In my opinion the "in spirit" of true worship is the FLOW in worship. The "in truth" of true worship is the FORM in worship. We must have both the flow and the form if our worship is to produce light much in the same way as the light that fills your home at night. It requires a "flow" of electrical current together with the

proper "form" of electrical wiring and facility. Take away either one and the lights will go off. Worse yet, take away the form but keep the flow and you will be calling the fire department!

We have beseeched the throne, "Lord send the fire, send the power, pour out the Spirit," etc. God has mercifully answered these requests many times only to see His power dissipate into wasteful displays of fleshly excesses. It often happens that a

"vessel" explodes because it is not purged and prepared to carry the power of God.

Even as the electrical wiring contains the proper form to conduct electricity, likewise the Word of God contains the proper pattern to channel the moving of the Spirit. When Jesus fed the multitude He did not instruct His disciples to leave the remainder of the feast for the birds and ants. We sing "He's more than enough" thinking that what is left over is to be left behind.

" *Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost."* God designed the physical body to be His temple. A temple is primarily a facility of worship. Worship begins with a flow and is culminated in an appropriate expression of the inner desire to glorify God. The "flow" in worship is the desire to worship. Innate with the new nature is the burning desire to glorify God. Through the impartation of the Holy Spirit a believer is given the ability to express his innermost desires to magnify God. Jesus said, *"He shall glorify me"* (John 16:14).

This is not only a privilege but a responsibility of our "temple":

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore GLORIFY God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The word translated "glorify" is the Greek word *doxa* and means "praise, honor, and worship."

The heavenly creatures rest not day or night in the worship of God. The seraphim (burning ones) that hover about the throne cry one unto another "Holy, holy holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." It is a

living, fresh, sincere worship with each utterance of "holy' and a deeper realization of the holiness of God. In an eternity, the depths of the infinite holiness of Yahweh can never be fully realized.

The sincerity of your heart toward God is seen by the Father in your worship. *Is your heart in your worship?* Only if God is your treasure for "where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Solomon treasured the worship of his God as expressed by the magnificent wealth displayed in the dedicatory offerings.

Solomon caught a glimpse of the great worthiness of God in his sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep on Mount Moriah (see 2 Chronicles 7). Why such an extravaganza?

Nothing is too costly, even an alabaster box worth 300 pence, in expression of love to the Lord. We could never calculate the costliness of the Supreme Sacrifice offered by God for us. May we offer in return our bodies as living sacrifices back to Him. It is our reasonable service (see Romans 12:1-2). " *If thou knewest the gift of God..."* Jesus told the water drawer, *"... thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water.'*

Knowing Jesus, the gift of God to man, produces the "in spirit" of true worship.

"The hour cometh, and NOW is, when the true worshippers SHALL...." In John 4:24 the verb reads "must": *"God is a Spirit and they that worship him MUST...."* True worshippers shall worship Him because they must worship Him. The true worshippers MUST worship THE FATHER. How? In spirit and in truth. God wants to be worshipped. He is seeking true worshippers.

In John 4:23 Christ referred to "'the *true* worshippers."

Knowing Jesus as I do, there is nothing He says that is without relevance. Had all worshippers been genuine He would not have designated them as "the true worshippers" but rather as "the worshippers." By using this adjective He was implying not all worshippers of God are true worshippers.

One immediately thinks, "Yes, since there are people who are not born-again and do not know God as their Father and yet go through the motions of worship, Jesus used the qualifying description." Yet, it is indeed clear in the Scripture that there are those who are part of the covenant, who are priests unto God, who are

ministering to Him in the tabernacle and who were yet classified by God as false worshippers.

In Leviticus 10 we see two sons of Aaron—Nadab and Abihu—who were qualified to minister to Yahweh in every respect. They were part of the covenant, they were in the priestly line, they were called upon to exercise the sacerdotal functions of their covenant. Yet we see they *"offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Leviticus 10:1-2).*

Nadab and Abihu had been true worshippers before they strayed from divine instruction and died under judgment. Herein lies a principle worthy of our consideration: *True worship produces life: false worship results in death.* Where the Holy Spirit is quenched and the letter of the Word is solely ministered, the result is "dead works' offered to God from which we are to repent. What is truly sad is that there are those whose consciences have been purged from dead works to serve the living God who offer the strange fire of religious worship to God (see Hebrews 6:1; 9:14). The blood that provides the means of access into the Holy Place has never been acted upon in faith and the worshippers remain in the Outer Court of traditional religion void of the quickening power of the Holy Spirit.

There are many things going on today in the name of worship which are not the pure fire God has commanded. The result is death. We substitute our own works failing to understand that the highest calling is ministering to the Lord.

Of Israel Yahweh said, *"This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise"* (Isaiah 43:21). The intent of this verse is that Elohim created Israel for His pleasure, which was to offer praise to Him.

Of the Church it is written *"... that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus redeemed us to praise Him!

For this reason we are chosen, royal, holy and peculiar.

As previously stated, worship was originally pronounced "worth-ship." A few years ago God's "worthship" to you would have been perhaps the singing of the doxology. Eventually His worthship increased in your estimation to the point where you were willing to show forth His praises in the public lifting of hands,

etc. Note these verses: *"... that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be PRAISE and dominion FOR EVER AND EVER"* (1 Peter 4:11). *"And a voice came out of the throne, saying PRAISE OUR GOD, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great"*

(Revelation 19:5). *"... therefore let us offer the sacrifice of PRAISE to God CONTINUALLY, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name"* (Hebrews 13:15). *"I will call upon the Lord who is WORTHY TO BE PRAISED"* (Psalm 18:3).

' Woman, believe me, the hour cometh.. . . " The hour coming is the hour of His glorification, by way of the cross, to set those who desire to be free from liturgy into living praise.

The blood He shed gives us boldness to enter the Holiest of all (see Hebrews 10:19). Jesus entreated her in an unusual way:

"Woman, believe me...." How beautiful it would be if the Church would believe Jesus. Like the Samaritan "he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." Paul exhorted the Corinthians, *"...for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"* (2 Corinthians 11:2). The Church is living with tradition instead of living with the Truth.

A recent survey of American churches indicated that the average church building is utilized one and three-quarters hours per week! Think of the tremendous financial sum invested in these buildings for such a short time of use! In the Old Testament the temple was a place of continuous activity, all of which was focused on the worship of God. It was the place to meet God, bring Him sacrifices, and to minister to Him. The Apostle Paul says that this has not changed: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all to the glory of God"*

(1 Corinthians 10:31). Everything we do is to be focused to the worship and praise of God.

Do you realize that as a believer you are a priest of the "spiritual house" of God (1 Peter 2:5). Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations," and if our body is the temple, it is the house of prayer for all nations. You are to be a house of prayer, a citadel of intercession, a place where spiritual sacrifices are being offered continually.

There were two broad requirements in the Old Testament tabernacle: It was to be 1) The house of God's residence, and 2) A facility used for worship.

The Apostle Paul brings this out when he said, *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"*

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him, and make our abode with him "* (John 14:23). WE are a habitation of God: "the Father and I are going to make our abode in you." Ephesians 4:6

reads: "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, AND IN YOU ALL." "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

In reference to Israel, God said, and we repeat it once more, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." In Revelation 4:11 this concept is worded from our point of view: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and FOR THY PLEASURE THEY ARE AND WERE CREATED." God does not exist for our pleasure, but we for His. How disgusting are the lines of the tent revival song: "Jesus on the main line, tell Him what you want.... Just call Him up, call Him up and tell Him what you want' *ad nauseum.* God is more than a heavenly bellhop anxiously waiting for our ring.

In meetings where the tangible anointing of God flows, the people enter into praise quite easily. Sometimes people praise God because it makes them feel good, not realizing the pleasure their praises bring to the Father. "Bless *the LORD,* O my soul ..." (Psalm 103:1).

The Letter to the Hebrews reveals that new covenant praise replaces old covenant burnt offerings as a sweet aroma. In the closing chapter the writer says, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the *fruit* of our lips giving thanks to his name' (Hebrews 13:15).

The word "fruit" is literally "calves, bullocks." That is to say that praise is "the calves of our lips, the bullocks of our lips." In the old covenant the fat of young cows and bulls was offered unto God for a burnt offering which smelled as a sweet savour to Him. Hosea realized this principle when he instructed the nation of Israel to "... turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and. receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips" (Hosea 14:2).

Praise is incense. God hears prayers, but smells praise. Mix your prayers with praise (see Philippians 4:6). There is something about praising God that excites Him. It makes God delighted to know that we who cannot see Him with the natural eye yet believe on Him. It seems folly to our minds, but pleases the "Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9).

As a teenager I worked in several barbecue restaurants. I started with the job of cleaning the pit after a meat fire. Oh, did it stink! I can still remember the smell. Later, after I was saved, I noticed where God repeatedly said that the burning of the animal sacrifices smelled pleasantly to Him. I realized that the Lord not only sees things differently from man (1 Samuel 16:7), but smells differently as well!

Several years later, from Hebrews 13:15, I realized the wonderful connection between burnt offerings and praise and laughed for joy. Just as a meat fire in the pit smelled dreadful to me, so the pure praise offered to God in the Spirit "smells" horrible to religious "noses" in the modern church of our day.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8).

In some circles there is an emphasis on the word "sacrifice" in connection with praise in the sense that one must make much sacrifice of personal comfort when praising God. It is true there are times when we do not feel like praising the One whom we are to continually praise, but the word "sacrifice" means that praise is the equivalent in the new covenant to that which animal offerings were under the Law.

There is a prophecy about "the sacrifice of praise" in Jeremiah which indicates

that Judah would be restored to her former inheritance after she learned to bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord.

"Thus saith the Lord; again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate ... the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, AS AT THE FIRST, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 33:10-11).

Often there exists an accurate parallel between God's dealings with Israel in the Old Testament and those with the Church in the new covenant. Both the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple built by Solomon were attested to by the supernatural display of God's glory. In Jeremiah's period, Nebuchadnezzar came and laid it waste. The temple was to be in a state of utter desolation when the above mentioned verses were fulfilled. However, Jeremiah prophesied a positive promise that would occur when Israel would be brought back to the Land after seventy years of Babylonian exile. "I will cause to return the captivity (the people carried away into exile) of the land, AS AT THE FIRST...."

The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

The corporate temple was likewise attested to by a supernatural display of God's glory, i.e., a rushing mighty wind, cloven tongues like as of fire, and speaking with other tongues.

The Glory of the Lord was there; so much so on Peter that the aura of the tangible presence of God that the sick brought near him were healed every one. The word "overshadow" in Acts 5:15 is *episkiazo* and means: "to envelop in a haze of brilliancy."

It is also used in connection with the Holy Spirit's coming upon Mary at the moment of the Incarnation (see Luke 1).

Over the centuries, however, the Church fell from her glorious beginning. What is happening in our day? The mighty miracles and movings of God are once again being restored to the Church. Like it began, the Church will be endued in the end (even greater). God is returning the captivity of the Church AS AT THE FIRST!

Israel used the five books of the Psalms as their ancient hymnal. One can easily

observe that the Psalms are filled with praises to Yahweh. It has been remarked that there is more black and white in the Bible on the topic of praise than on any other single practice. Because the Holy Spirit breathed through holy men of God as the Word was put into writing, we must realize the top priority the Holy Spirit gives to our praising of the Lord.

Jesus said, "He (the Holy Spirit) shall glorify Me...." (John 16:14).

A second reason such emphasis is placed upon praise in the Scriptures is because praise brings the victory to us in our times of trial. This thought is beautifully expressed in Psalm 50:23:

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."

"Whoso..." means *anyone!* "Anyone who offers praise glorifies Me" says the Lord.

" . . . offereth ..." means "to make a sacrifice." Our principle thus far is: *Anyone who makes a sacrifice to praise glorifies God!* We are sometimes led to believe one must do a very hard thing to glorify God in this life. While it is true that God requires us to give Him all in taking up our daily cross, the Scripture says that we can glorify Him simply by making a sacrifice of praise to Him. Notice the verse does not say,

"Whoso goeth to Africa glorifieth Me."

One of the inbred characteristics of the new nature received through the new birth is a deep yearning of the innermost being to glorify God. Thus, by praising God, a believer can express this desire to the One who created it within the new nature. In the expressing of this desire to glorify God by vocalized praise, a deep fulfillment comes within the heart. A life of true worship will not be a life of spiritual frustration.

The remainder of Psalm 50:23 reads: *"... and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."* The word "conversation" means the behavior and manner of life. The word "shew" means to manifest, make known, or reveal. The word "salvation" means deliverance, healing, prosperity, and victory. Thus this verse can be fully realized in the following expression: ANYONE WHO MAKES A SACRIFICE OF PRAISE GLORIFIES

GOD: AND TO HIM WHO ORDERS HIS MANNER OF LIFE CORRECTLY WILL I MANIFEST THE VICTORY OF GOD!

We are told in Psalm 78 that Israel forgot God's salvation because they "remembered not all his works." In this Psalm salvation means ALL THE WORKS OF GOD. It is more than deliverance from Egypt. It is more than the parting of the Red Sea, more than the manna every morning, more than clothes that did not wear out. It is more than the new birth and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. *Salvation is Jesus every moment!* Knox rendered this verse this way: "Anybody who praises me prepares the way for me to manifest my victory."

Praise prepares the way for God to manifest His victory. An excellent example was Jehoshaphat's victory over the three armies that attacked them in 2 Chronicles 20. Because the Israelites were vastly outnumbered, the King instructed the people to pray and fast. As they sought the Lord, a Levite began to prophesy,

"Be not afraid or dismayed by reason of the great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go ye down against them.... Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand still, and see the SALVATION of the LORD with you ... and the Levites ... and the children of the Korhites, STOOD UP TO PRAISE THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL with a loud voice on high" (2 Chronicles 20:15-19).

What was the end result of their praises (and fasting, supplication, and trust)?

"And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten, for the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them ... every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah ... looked unto the multitude, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped" (2 Chronicles 20:22-24).

In this passage we see that: PRAISE CONFUSED THE ENEMY AND PREPARED THE WAY FOR GOD TO MANIFEST HIS VICTORY. Those who laid aside their weapons and praised God went out empty-handed, but came back full. They were *"three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much"* (verse 25). God showed Israel His victory in that not only was Judah set free from three stronger armies, she was also given the spoil or riches these three armies had

amassed through their raids in other countries. All of this occurred in a large valley.

Jehoshaphat named the place of victory "THE VALLEY OF BERACHAH" which means "the valley of blessing and prosperity." This valley had appeared to be a shadow of death—extinction appeared unavoidable—but God had changed it into a valley of blessing and prosperity. Often Christians remark about their trials and difficulties as a valley through which they must pass. Hear what God says about these valleys: *"The VALLEYS*

are covered over with corn; they SHOUT FOR JOY, they also SING" (Psalm 65:13). Praise activates the principle of Berachah: Blessing and Prosperity flow in the valley when praise is offered to God. Jehoshaphat put the praisers out front and won God's victory. Praise can turn your valley of despair into a valley of blessing. Learn to put the praise out front!

Even as there is a positive law that praise brings deliverance, there is an opposite law that murmuring destroys. *"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer'* (1 Corinthians 10:10).

Why Praise Brings the Victory

In Psalm 22:3 we read: *"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."* That word "inhabitest" literally means: to sit enthroned upon, to dwell in. God dwells in the praises of His people. Their praise creates the throne on which He sits. He is the King and He alone deserves this throne. Our praises exalt Him in the public meeting to the point that the King can come among us and sit enthroned upon our heart's adoration.

As we minister to Him with our praise, He will minister to us with His provision. We will receive the direction and guidance for which we long have prayed when we get caught up in adoration of Him. We see such an example in Acts 13:1-4.

"As they ministered to the Lord...the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.... So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia...." The word "minister" means: *"to be in attendance upon, to wait before, to receive orders."*

Ministering to the Lord involves long periods of waiting in His presence with prayer and praise. Sometimes people say, "I don't know what God would have

me to do with my life, but I'm waiting on the Lord until I find out." When asked what they mean by "waiting on the Lord," the usual reply reveals it is marking off days from the calendar. If that is truly waiting on the Lord, the most reprobate prisoners are doing the same. Some Christians are waiting on the Lord as if they must wait for Him to catch up with them!

Having studied the Hebrew and Greek words translated in the Old and New Testaments as: waiting, ministering, serving, etc., I find the true waiting on the Lord to be basking in His presence, quietly and patiently trusting in Him to bring it to pass, and standing in attendance in His presence to receive His instructions.

We are waiting on the Lord when we minister to Him with the fruit of our lips. An old timer shared this unique insight about prayer: "You will get further in an hour's praying if you'll spend five minutes ASKING and fifty-five minutes BASKING."

Prayer does not change the unchangeable God. Prayer gets the pray-er into the realm where he or she can hear specifically and unmistakably the Father's voice. So often our praying is giving advice to God; we tell Him what He needs to do. Those who make good and easy progress in their walk pray in order to receive His instructions.

"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength ..." (Isaiah 40:31). One meaning of the word "renew" is *exchange.* As we spend time basking in God's presence, warming under the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, our weakness is exchanged for His strength. "My power is perfected in weakness" Jesus promised Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9, Fenton translation). When we are weak in ourselves we can be strong in our God.

Jesus said, *"Men ought always to pray and not to faint'*(Luke 18:1). Fainting occurs when a shortage of oxygen is experienced in the brain. In the last verse of the Psalms, praise is associated with breathing. Praise is the oxygen of heaven that our spirits breathe. Whenever we grow weary and fainthearted, we need to "breathe" in the presence of God by the fruit of our lips. David expressed the same thought this way: *"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's"* (Psalm 103:5). Note the comparison between David's "thy youth is renewed like the eagle's' and Isaiah's "(they) shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as an eagle.'

The eagle is the highest flying bird. Praise and worship (the good things that satisfy the mouth) lift the believer up into the high realms of the Spirit. God wants us to soar into the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. As we fly into the higher realms of God, it will be on the wings of praise and worship. Those who are not in a hurry with God will find He is not in a hurry with them. Spend time with God and He will spend time with you.

As I travel across the land I notice again and again how lacking the corporate worship of the Body of Christ is in the true presence of God. As I sought the Lord about this problem I became aware that corporate worship is but the collective worship of individual worshippers. The deadness of the praise services in many churches is but a reflection of the deadness of the praise in the individual temples of the Holy Ghost. In the middle of a truly blessed worship service one evening I was given a precious vision from the Lord. I saw a sparkling stream bubbling over the rocks with a happy melodious splash. Birds were singing all around and the day was sunny but cool. I was made to know this was a victorious believer ministering the living water of praise back to the Giver. Quickly I was transported near another stream quite similar in appearance but distinctively different in the tone of the splash against its rocks.

Then a third and a fourth such streams were seen. Immediately I was removed to a large hill overlooking a mighty river. It contained the sound of many waters of praise to the living God.

After the vision had ceased I enquired of the Lord, "Was the mighty river a picture of the praise You are hearing from the saints and angels in heaven?" He replied, "No, the mighty river is a symbol of a group of 30 believers in Texas who are worshipping Me now." My! The Power that is present in praise!

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Someone pointed out that the words "are gathered together" can be translated also as "make a symphony together" in Jesus' Name.

Thus we see that Jesus will personally visit even a small gathering of believers who worship Him in spirit and in truth!

The experience in such meetings is similar to Moses' beholding the residue of God's glory after He passed by.

Seven Blessings of God's Presence

1. Praise creates an atmosphere that attracts the conscious presence of God. Where His presence is His JOY reigns supreme. *"In thy presence is fullness of joy"* (Psalm 16:11). A benefit of our praising the Lord is the JOY His presence brings.

2. In God's presence there is deep FULFILLMENT: *" . . . and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"* (Psalm 16:11).

3. There is HEALING in His presence. *"And it came to pass on a certain day, t h a t . . . the power of the Lord was present to heal them"* (Luke 5:17). Being present where Jesus is will bring healing. There are times when the Presence is so real that people are healed without the use of the customary methods of ministering to the sick.

4. There is BEAUTY in God's presence: *"For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation"* (Psalm 149:4). When the joy of the Lord comes upon a child of God, the countenance of the individual brightens and beautifies. Once I saw Kathryn Kuhlman before a miracle service began. She looked older than her 65 years testified. Only a few moments later, and again a few feet from her, I saw the face of a lovely 16-year-old maiden (or so it seemed). She blossomed when under the restorative anointing of the Holy Spirit. The opposite is likewise true: Cain's countenance fell (see Genesis 4:5).

5. Where God's presence is, there is REFRESHING. On the Day of Pentecost Peter exhorted the lost: *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, WHEN THE TIMES OF REFRESHING SHALL COME FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD"* (Acts 3:19).

Where do we get refreshed? In the presence of the Lord!

6. God's presence results in DELIVERANCE. In 1 Samuel 16:14-23 we are shown such an example. The young Bethlehemite, David son of Jesse, played his harp before the tormented Saul and the evil spirit departed from Saul. *"So Saul was refreshed, and was well...."* There's more than one way to cast out a demon!

7. Where there is praise there is SALVATION. "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple ... *praising God,* and having favor with all the people. *And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:46-47).

Who is Entitled to Praise God?

According to Psalm 150:6 there is only one requirement to be eligible to be a praiser. *"Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."*

The devil will accuse you saying, "Who do you think you are to praise God. Look at this and look at that in your life.' You may not be perfect yet, but don't let that hinder your worship of God. AS LONG AS YOU ARE A BREATHER YOU CAN BE A PRAISER!

Looking at praise from a purely physical point of view, it is interesting to note that the exclamation of appreciation is given forth only on the exhale of the breath. The inhale is what you need to carry oxygen into your lungs and throughout your body.

The exhale is what you don't need; you give out what is left over. It won't hurt you to praise God.

When I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit at dawn in 1970, I sang praises to the Lord. The sun was coming up and the birds were singing outside. They were praising the Creator with me. *"Praise ye h i m . . . all flying fowl (birds of wing)"* (Psalm 148:10).

It is scriptural to likewise "shout unto God with a voice of triumph" (a clear ringing voice—Fenton Translation) (Psalm 47:1). This ringing cry doesn't have to always be loud, but a joyful cry. Like the Israelites at Jericho, it was a shout of victory voiced loudly when the enemy would be overcome.

What Is True Worship?

True worship is *stimulated* in the spirit of the believer, *experienced* in the soul, and *demonstrated* in the body. IF our worship is what it really should be, our God is worth shouting for with a ringing cry. He is worth lifting holy hands before His throne with exceeding joy and gently swaying them in a wave offering. He is worth singing to in a heavenly tongue and worthy of our silent adoration in times of a holy hush. He is worthy of our praise. As we allow the Word of Christ to saturate us fully, we will teach and admonish one another as we enter into psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs before the Lord (based on Colossians 3:16). *"Be filled (be being filled) with the Spirit; speaking to*

yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19).

God is worth dancing, leaping for joy, and marching for. But always remember true worship must be in spirit and in truth. Let the form be determined by the flow. An excellent way to learn is in your prayer closet. If you have difficulty dancing before the Lord with people around, get before the Lord privately and tell Him: "I yield my feet to You. My feet are part of the body. My body is the temple. The temple is the proper facility for worship.

I will to glorify God in my body and in my spirit which are Yours." Let that holy joy and delight stimulate your actions.

Never be light or frivolous concerning your acts of praise.

There must always be a holy reverence or sense of awe as you minister to the Lord. Of course there will be joy, sometimes even laughter, but it will be a holy joy. When you truly see the Majesty, your flesh will tremble with reverence toward Him.

Second Corinthians 3:17 promises us *"Now the Lord is that Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."* When the Holy Spirit is yielded to there will be sweet, precious liberty.

When His leadership is quenched there will be bondage.

Two Kinds of Victory

We have stated that praise prepares the way for God to manifest His victory. There are two kinds of victory of which we speak: outward and inward. Let us look at Paul for an example.

Paul's "reward" for casting out a demon was a public beating and incarceration in a Macedonian jail. Along with his assistant, Silas, he prayed *"and sang praises unto God"* (Acts 16:25). As a certain southern preacher said, "God began to keep time with His foot" and the prison doors swung open during the earthquake. You know the rest of the story. By maintaining the correct attitude of glorying in the persecution of man for the sake of the Gospel, Paul and Silas were able to avoid the common pitfall of murmuring and complaining over their lot.

With backs bruised and feet bound in stocks they prayed and sang praises oblivious to their physical condition. The praises they sang to God were a key element in their outward deliverance from the cell that held them.

Later in his epistles we count five occasions where the Apostle referred to himself as "the prisoner" of the Lord. Why did he call himself a prisoner of the Lord Jesus? Jesus came to set Paul free; it was Rome that bound him. The only suitable explanation to be found is that Paul must have done the same things when thrown into prison later without obtaining a supernatural release on any further occasion. There was no earthquake and the prison doors held fast. Years after his supernatural deliverance from the Macedonian prison in the city of Philippi, he wrote the church in that city and acknowledged he was at that moment under the Roman chain (see Philippians 1:7, 13-14). Yet in the same letter he exhorted the Philippians to " *Rejoice in the Lord alway:* and again I say, Rejoice.... Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:4, 6).

No doubt he practiced what he preached. Obviously he had been rejoicing in the Lord in his prison cell and offering prayers with thanksgiving as he had done years before as recorded in Acts 16. Paul realized that no cell could hold him unless God willed it. He had walked free by the power of God the first time.

Now he was held by a chain. He was not the prisoner of Rome, but the prisoner of Christ. He maintained his attitude of rejoicing and his continuous praise to the Lord during his frequent jail stays and kept the victory on the inside. Praise prepares the way to victory. He was held in body, but free in spirit. It was his rejoicing in Christ Jesus that set him free and kept him free no matter what his circumstances. Inward victory means permanent victory.

The Key to Seeing the Power of God

Where God's conscious presence is His conscious power is manifested. One day while a scared Hebrew was beating out wheat behind a winepress to keep it out of sight of the oppressive Midianites, the angel of the LORD appeared to him.

"The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour" (Judges 25 6:12). Mighty man of courage? God saw Gideon as he would become not as he presently was. The angel addressed a man who would dare to stand up against the idolatry of

his day and against the tyrants who ruled over his people. Nevertheless, at the moment the angel appeared to him Gideon was not much of a courageous man.

He was scared yet the angel called him "a mighty man of courage."

He felt forsaken and alone yet the angel declared "the LORD is with you!"

The words of this messenger were perplexing to young Gideon. He rightly questioned in response to the strange salutation: " *If the LORD be with us,* why then is all this (Midianite oppression) befallen us? And *where be all his miracles* which our fathers told us of?"

Let's examine the meaning of the italicized portions of his response:

"If the LORD be with u s . . . " In effect Gideon questioned,

"If I truly have the presence of God in my life why are my enemies oppressing me?"

" . . . where be all his miracles. . . " Gideon thought, "If I have God's presence where then are the supernatural results of His power?"

Now let's tie both statements together: "If the LORD be with us where be all his miracles?" It is impossible to have the presence of God but not the power of God because the power of God is the presence of God in operation.

Note the reason Peter gives for Jesus' ability to heal those who were afflicted by the devil: *"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil; for GOD WAS WITH HIM"* (Acts 10:38). Jesus manifested God's power because He had God's presence even as Nicodemus acknowledged: *"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: FOR NO MAN CAN DO THESE MIRACLES THAT THOU DOEST, EXCEPT GOD BE WITH HIM"* (John 3:2).

We should rightly question the Lord's abiding presence if we never see any manifestation of His power. Not that we must see or otherwise will not believe, but, in the words of Jesus: *"If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God"* (John 11:40).

God inhabits our praises. Praise is one of the keys given to us in the Word of

God to seeing His power manifested in our lives.

Let us offer Him the fruit of our lips right now....

About the Author

David Alsobrook is a living testimony to God's great grace. Although he was raised in a minister's home he rebelled against the church's teachings in his early teens. He became involved in all forms of sin embracing the hippy tradition of the late 60's.

Through active involvement in Transcendental Meditation a strong spirit of suicide obsessed his mind in the Summer and Fall of ' 69 until in his despair he called on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was born again on November 30, 1969, and read the Bible from cover to cover four times the first six months.

As a result of intensive study of the Word of God he was led into a conviction of the reality of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit for today. At the age of 17 he began traveling the country sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and teaching the Word of God without partiality to man's traditions.

God has confirmed His Word through supernatural signs and wonders on many occasions. David teaches the Kingdom of God on a wide variety of subjects. Dianne, his wife, assists him in ministering to people's needs.

They are the happy parents of two lovely children and make their home in Paducah, Kentucky.

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