

When I pastored in PA my home was located about 100 yards behind the church. One evening in winter of 2011 while walking from the church office to my home I slipped on some ice, fell backwards and tore my rotator cuff. Surgery was followed by rehab. Rehab was required so that I could gain use of my shoulder. It started with the simplest of exercises: bend at the waist, let me arm drop and rotate it in small circles; then there was a small finger ladder on the wall where I was to walk my fingers up the ladder until my arm was fully extended; those and other exercises went on for 4-6 months before healing and motion were restored.

There were times when I wanted to quit or not do the exercises at home but what kept me going was the fact that I was seeing progress. Pain was diminishing, motion was improving and strength was returning. Because I am seeing positive results I was motivated to continue to work at it.

A similar thing happens when we worship – positive changes take place. While we do not worship to get from God the reality is that there are changes that worship produces in our lives. This is true whether the worship is public or private. I've used those terms "public and private" throughout this series so allow me to give you a brief definition of both. Public worship is the gathering of God's people (his possession – 1 Pet.2:9) for the express purpose of declaring his worth – exalting him; to adore him in song, scripture reading, giving, listening and actively participating in whatever liturgy is used.

Private worship is sitting alone with God as his child to reflect, meditate, sing, pray, praise him for who he is and exalt him. Both public and private worship require our attendance and participation. You do not worship in abstentia – you worship in person. Sum it up with 4 words: "show up and participate"!

So here is my question for this morning. What will be different in your life when you make worship more than a once a week Sunday morning experience? This morning I want to share the "fruits" of worship; the positive changes that God produces in our lives when we develop a lifestyle of worship. Let me repeat that authentic worshippers do not worship "to get something out of this". Worship is for God's glory, to declare his worth, to adore him and it is not about us. God deserves our worship, he is worthy of it whether we "get anything out of it" or not. However the reality is that God is so amazingly gracious and cares so much for us that he is determined to bless those who worship in spirit and in truth. Allow me this morning to share the joys, the changes, the benefits that worship brings. I have 3 of them for you.

I. Worship Produces the Fruit of Intimacy with God

Psalm 22:3; James 4:8

Turn to Psalm 22. The superscription records that this is a song of David. The church has understood this psalm to be typological of the death of Jesus Christ.

What I want to focus on is vs.3: *You are holy, you are enthroned upon (or inhabit) the praises of your people.* The Hebrew *yashab* meaning "to sit or dwell" is here translated "enthroned". Think about this statement. God is enthroned in the sense that he dwells or lives among the praises of his people. Another way to see it is that praise is where you find God. Since praise focuses on who God is and what God does, when we praise God we worship God. When you give God praise, when we worship him we enter his presence.

James puts it this way (4:8): *Draw near to God and (what happens?) he will draw near to you.* To experience God's presence draw near to God. To "draw near" was used of the priests in the tabernacle who approached God with their sacrifices (Lev.10:3; 21:21-23). It was also used in a wider sense and those who came to God in worship – negatively (Is.26:13 – "draw near to worship but only with their lips" and positively Hosea 12:6 – "return or draw near" to wait for God). Thus the term conveys the idea of entering into communion with God as acceptable worshippers.

You can't draw close to someone by chance or by accident. You have to plan for closeness. That's true in marriage as couples don't drift into intimacy and it's true in our relationship with God. Intentionality is necessary to achieve intimacy with God.

The way you draw near to God is with praise. The result is his presence, an awareness that he is with you – intimacy with God. Note Heb.10:19-22 with 4:14-16. The first is God's invitation to draw near in worship and the 2nd is what we receive when we do so – grace and mercy to help.

One of the ways you draw near is by reciting who God is in your praise: I praise you God for being MY rock, refuge, fortress, shepherd, counselor, father, king, provider, redeemer, you are faithful, merciful, compassionate, gracious, kind, good, just, righteous, jealous, and in all of this you are holy! Plan for praise, write down your praise and verbalize your praise. You do not drift into intimacy with God. Develop the relationship.

You cannot be a part time Christian a "S.M.O." – Sunday Morning Only saint and still be maturing as God desires. The closer you draw to God the more like Him you will become. It's like being out in the hot sun – you sweat. You can't help it. Greater closeness to God produces a greater likeness to Him. Note how Paul expressed it in 2 Cor.3:18 – as we look we are being changed. Seeing who God is changes us. We "see" him as we recite his character in praise.

And here is a little warning. When you draw near to God you are coming to the Holy One. You are drawing near to one who has an entirely different standard. He will X-Ray you and penetrate your soul. He is going to expose and deal with your sin. You can't draw near to God without dealing with your sin. Worship leads to intimacy w/God.

II. Worship Produces the Fruit of a Restored Faith Psalm 73

There is not a believer here today who hasn't at one time or another thought about throwing in the spiritual towel, quitting and going the other way. We have wondered is the Christian life worth it. Why? As we live and look around us it appears that the sinners have got it made. They appear healthier, richer, happier, and as one of the first modern Christian musicians stated: "they have all the good music".

For some help and thoughts turn to Psalm 73. *Psalm 73 tells the story of a godly man who felt his faith slipping away* vs. 1-2. The superscription tells us that this is a psalm by Asaph. We know from elsewhere in the Old Testament that he was a worship leader at the temple in Jerusalem during the days of King David.

Why was his faith slipping away? Because of the prosperity of the wicked – 3. Doesn't the prosperity of the wicked irk you at times? Particularly if you work with them, live in the same neighborhood with them, go to school with them, serve on committees with them, or they are your boss, or even your mate. How annoying is that? How discouraging?

This is what happened to Asaph as he focused on the prosperity of the wicked around him. They were healthy – 4; living the good life – 5; full of pride, boasting and sin – 6-9; popular, carefree and wealthy – 10-12. Asaph was discouraged and annoyed.

Asaph seems to hit bottom in verses 13-14. What really bothers him is *that all too often the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer*. From a strictly analytical point of view, that stinks. What is the point of being faithful to God, is basically what he says. The whole thing was very troubling to him – vs. 16. So how will he respond? Notice vs.17 begins with *until*. It was what he did in vs.17 that changed everything and brought him to vs.25-28. What was it that made the difference? What did he do? Where did he go?

He went into the Temple, the sanctuary, the presence of God to worship. When he worshipped God everything changed. In the presence of God we see things differently. Why? Because we began to see them from God's perspective, better yet we simply see God and that is enough. It doesn't matter that we grasp what is happening or even why, what matters is that we see God. That is the place Asaph reaches in vs.25, 28.

That is what worship does. When you worship God you see God more clearly and your faith is restored. Have you ever come to a worship service feeling down, confused or discouraged with life, only to have God touch your heart and lift your spirits so when you left you were encouraged and lifted up? What happened? Worship changed your perspective. Simply stated worship restores your faith. It enables you to hang in there when you want to throw in the towel. So when you are discouraged and feel like quitting – worship God. Publically – show up to church and privately – spend time with God.

III. Worship Produces the Fruit of Spiritual Victory 2 Chron. 20:1-30

When it comes to spiritual warfare what comes to mind? Eph.6 – the armor of God; James 4:7 resist the devil and he will flee from you; Matt.4 as Jesus defeated the devil by quoting Scripture so can we. But have you ever thought of worship as warfare?

God and Satan have this in common: each desires our worship. God wants us to worship him because he is worthy and wants to transform us. Satan wants our worship because he wants to destroy us. What was at issue in the 1st murder recorded in Scripture? Worship. Both Cain and Able came to worship God but when God did not accept Cain's worship but did accept Abel's Cain's response was to kill Abel. When Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness it involved the question of who was to be worshipped – Satan or God.

David Jeremiah in My Heart's Desire *We believers are quick to discuss warfare and we have our opinions about worship. But we seldom make the crucial connection between the two...Some have said that Satan has an allergic reaction whenever there is true worship. That's an interesting way of visualizing it; perhaps when we break out in praise, the devil breaks out in hives...he becomes very uncomfortable when we take our eyes off ourselves and place them squarely and worshipfully on the Lord of grace.* (pg. 124)

Amy Carmichael, a missionary who cared for children in south India added, *"I believe truly that Satan cannot endure praise and worship, so he slips out of the room, more or less when there is a true song."*

Consider that midnight in a Philippian jail, when Paul and Silas lifted their voices and sang praises to God. Suddenly the prison doors were opened and the chains unfastened with the result that the jailer and his family come to faith in Christ. Or Jonah from the belly of the great fish; *While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you in your holy temple. Those who regard (worship) vain idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord.* The fish vomited Jonah onto dry ground. His ministry in Nineveh results in widespread salvation. Satan's attack against Job was in the sphere of worship. Satan's argument was that Job worshiped God only because God blessed him. Think of all the psalms in which David begins in deep depression, lamenting the injustice of his enemies' success. In so many of these once he turns his attention to God and gives him praise he ends on a note of victory.

When it comes to spirituality it seems we know more of defeat than victory. We yield to temptation; we struggle with negative attitudes; we curse and say words we regret; we are fearful and we worry. To experience more victory and less defeat – worship God.

Turn to 2 Chronicles 20. Word comes to King Jehoshaphat that his enemies are about to attack – 1-2. The reaction of the king is fear – 3a, but notice what he did in 3b. He called for a worship service.

When the people had come together Jehoshaphat leads them in worship and prayer – 5-12. The prayer focuses on who God is, what God has done, the promises he has made and the current problem.

Note vs. 12: *“We have no power to face this vast army that is coming against us.”* Have you ever felt like that? Overwhelmed, inadequate, uncertain? If you are there right now, don’t despair. God delights to intervene on behalf of powerless people. This whole story pictures our situation in the world. We are always outnumbered, always outflanked, perpetually surrounded by duties, cares, hindrances, harassments, problems and the entanglements of life along w/temptations.

Back to the last phrase of Jehoshaphat’s prayer: *“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.”* We will worship you. We will trust you. We will look to you for help. That’s where God wants you to be. That’s Ground Zero of the spiritual life. Worship God!

The entire nation is now standing – infants, wives and children - waiting vs. 13. As they wait God moves – 14 and Jahaziel spoke God’s truth to the situation – 15b.

Note how Jehoshaphat and the people responded to God’s Word – 18-19. They bowed down in worship and stood up in praise. The next morning when they went out to battle the worship service continued because the singers, not the infantry went out in front of the army-21. While the people and the army were having a great time in worship God took care of the enemy causing them to turn on each other – 22.

Then with the victory in hand what did the people do? Vs.28- they headed straight to the house of the Lord to worship. They worshiped God before the crisis, they worshiped during the crisis, and they worshiped after the crisis. Worship was not an event they attended; worship was a way of life for the people of God. And God responded to their worship by giving them a fantastic victory.

Once again we come face to face with the reality that worship is not something we do just one hour a week. Nor is it simply a religious routine reserved for Sunday morning. Worship is our response to God for who he is and what he has done so we turn to him in our helplessness!

Let me state it another way: Praise wasn’t the prelude to the battle; praise was the battle. Worship wasn’t the preparation for the strategy; worship was the strategy. Let me make my meaning plain: When we worship, God’s mighty power is unleashed on our behalf. Worship opens the door for God’s delivering power to flow into our desperation.

Warren Wiersbe in Real Worship *In short Israel was a worshipping army, fighting the battles of the Lord. The success of their warfare depended on the success of their worship. If they were “right with God” they had no difficulty defeating their enemies. If they were not pleasing to God, they were shamefully defeated. It was a simple as that.* (pg. 150)

He goes on to say: *the history of the church is the story of believing people storming the gates of hell and delivering those held in sin’s bondage. The military images used of the church in the NT ought to convince us that the Christian life...is a battle that we cannot escape and that we dare not lose; and the key to our victory is worship.* (pg.154)

Since we are engaged in spiritual battle it requires spiritual weapons and the foremost of that is worship. *We are unprepared for the battlefield if we have not lingered to worship in the throne room.* (Wiersbe, pg. 159).

The bible says that JC “*appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil*” (1 Jn.3:8). When your spiritual adversary shows up, if you will turn to Christ in worship, you will experience the victory he promised. Worship generates spiritual victory.

Conclusion

When worship becomes our lifestyle; when we develop the habit of adoring God for who he is and what he has done it will change our lives.

1. Worship produces the fruit of intimacy with God. We know God better and enjoy our relationship with him more as we worship.
2. Worship restores our faith when we are struggling to believe or see God at work. We see God clearer when we worship because worship is about God in all his glory.
3. Worship leads to spiritual victory. When we worship God with clean hands and pure hearts Satan flees.

Worship is both an end in itself – he is worthy; as well as the means to spiritual growth for worship produces fruit in our lives.

You will make known to me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasure forevermore. Ps. 16:11

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