

## *The Inner Essence of Worship*

### I. A BIBLICAL AND CONTEXTUAL DEFINITION OF WORSHIP: INNER ESSENCE VS. EXTERNAL EXPRESSION

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)*

A. What is the heart-experience that moves us to “do everything to the glory of God”? It’s not the external things of worship that we need to talk about – it’s the internal things:

*“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me...” (Matthew 15:8-9)*

1. Honoring God with externals [‘words’] but a distant [‘unsatisfied’] heart
2. Vain [‘pointless,’ ‘futile’] worship

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)*

3. The call to God satisfying worship is the call to soul satisfying worship. In other words, it isn’t our duty that honors God but our delight. That is, if we don’t enjoy God, we can’t satisfy or magnify God.

“The end of the creation is that the creation **might glorify [God]**. Now what is glorifying God, but a **rejoicing at that glory** he has displayed?”<sup>1</sup>

“God is glorified not only by His Glory being seen, **but by it being rejoiced in**. When those that see it delight in it, God is **more glorified than if they had only seen it**. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart. God made the whole world that He might communicate His glory and that the creature might receive this communication of glory. He that testifies the concept of God’s glory **without delight fails to exalt God in the most glorifying way.**”

- B. Worship that is not vain but that honors God is this: The emotional, intellectual, volitional and physical expression of the *heart’s* experiential encounter with the superiority of God. Therefore, worship is *the response of enjoyment and delight* in the Godhood of *God* that is revealed by God to the believer.
- C. Within the New Testament we see an intentional de-externalization of worship (in contrast to the OT). That is, the NT is silent on the issue of “form” and loud on the issue of being internally satisfied with God.
- D. We need an experience of satisfaction on the inside so that we express worship in everything on the outside. All Christians affirm this intellectually but nearly all are distant from it experientially.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The End for Which God Created the World*

## II. THE INNER ESSENCE OF WORSHIP: SEEING AND EXPERIENCING JESUS AS SUPERIOR TO ALL GAIN AND LOSS

*...as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured/magnified/glorified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far BETTER. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith... (Philippians 1:20-25)*

- A. The core statement that the conjunction statements are attached to is Paul's desire to honor, magnify and glorify Jesus in life and in death. This is a very weighty statement that has radical implications on how we see and understand worship. There are two dimensions here: magnifying Jesus by life and magnifying Jesus by death.

*...as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured/magnified/glorified in my body, whether by life or by death.*

- B. The word "for" in the next verse is the conjunction that explains to us what Paul means by "magnifying Jesus by life or by death." The word "for" is an apostolic "because." This is where Paul builds his case. Note the connection between "life" and "death" in both verses. They are connected logically.

*... whether by LIFE or by DEATH. For to me to LIVE is Christ, and to DIE is gain.*

1. To LIVE is Christ

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things [in life] and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ... (Philippians 3:7-8)*

2. To DIE is gain

- C. Paul's tension between life and death:

*If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far BETTER. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith*

1. Paul's greatest joy was to be with Jesus; but Jesus' greatest joy is when the saints find their greatest joy in Him. So Paul found joy in the fact that Jesus found joy in Paul continuing with them to help them find their joy in Jesus.

2. The Christian life and the Christian ministry are centered around Christ-centered joy.

*But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. (John 17:13)*

### III. FIVE PROPOSITIONS ABOUT A WORSHIPING HEART

- A. **Proposition #1 – A worshiping heart is a heart that is on a quest for personal joy and satisfaction; and this greatly honors God.** Some would argue that a quest for personal satisfaction in God could be perverted and become inward and self-centered. Some argue that it is about “me” and “my pleasure” moral and ethical flaws taint our doctrine of worship. The problem with this theory is that our doctrine of worship says that our satisfaction is *in Him*. Yes it is for us, but it is *in Him*. And if it is in Him, then it is *for Him*. In other words, we don’t have to choose between our pleasure and God’s glory. As C.S. Lewis said: “The Scotch catechism says that man’s chief end is “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.” (*A Word About Praise in Reflections on the Psalms*)

*As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” (Psalm 42:1-3)*

- B. **Proposition #2 – A worshiping heart precedes sacrifice and self-denial.** This revelation of gaining Christ in life and in death has massive implications on the subject of self-denial and sacrifice. This verse is largely misunderstood in that Jesus was calling us to lose the inferior to gain the superior – not to just deny sin to receive salvation from hell. Salvation from hell is breath-taking! But it is a means not an end. The end is gaining Christ who is superior to all that we could ever gain or lose in this life.

*“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:34-36)*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)*

- C. **Proposition #3 – A worshiping heart is the pre-requisite for anointed evangelism and historic awakening.** For those who see Jesus as their highest joy, greatest reward and most valuable treasure, great promises are assured.

*“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to*

*all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:11-16)*

1. We're all so familiar with this verse but we have no idea what it means. Think of how radical this statement is at the beginning about being reviled and persecuted. Who says that? What sort of nut job would ever say that?
2. Rejoice and gladness is centered around a heavenly reward. Jesus is our reward. No reward could be more valuable than Him.
3. We have an anointing in evangelism ("light of the world") to the degree that we see, experience and prove Jesus to be our greatest joy. When we do not we have no authority in our evangelism. Why? - Because "salt" and "light" evangelism requires the glad and rejoicing heart that looks suffering, loss and persecution with confidence because nothing we could ever gain or lose in this age compares to the worth of gaining Christ.

- D. **Proposition #4 – A worshiping heart is what God requires of the nations. In fact, He promises temporal and eternal judgments for those who do not worship God as superior.**

***"Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:12-13)***

***Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things, therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young. It shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground, until you are destroyed; it also shall not leave you grain, wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock, until they have caused you to perish. (Deuteronomy 28:47-51)***

The basis and grounds of Eternal punishment is God's infinitely valuable glory being exchanged for lesser glory. Punishment is proportional to the worth of the One offended – and God is infinitely and eternally worthy. Temporal and eternal judgments hinge on God's personal value. We see the Lake of Fire as an intolerable doctrine because we haven't seen the glory of God yet.

- E. **Proposition #5 – A worshiping heart is an end before it is a means.** Being satisfied in God is a powerful means for the accomplishing of a million things. But it must be a means only after it is an end. A billion years from now when there are no more needs for means, worship will be incessant for all eternity. Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4 testify to us that worship is an eternal reality that is altogether unattached from causes and needs.

- F. **Proposition #6 – A worshiping heart is the only seedbed for sustainable holiness/obedience/purity.** We don't grit our teeth to obey Him. We're after affection-based obedience and happy holiness.