

Worship That Pleases The Lord

Psalm 134

Introduction: 1) Roland Allen writes, “The psalms are love songs to the living God.” (*Worship Leader*, 1994, 6). I think he is on to something. Written out of gratitude for His kindness and confidence in his providence, the psalms, in the context of worship, say to our God, we love you, we honor you, we bless you.

2) Jesus teaches us in John 4:24 to worship the Lord “in spirit and truth.” What characterizes such worship? Woodrow Kroll provides a nice concise summary of what we should mean and not mean by worship. He writes,

“This is a strange day in some Christian circles. It’s a day when praise is in and worship is out. Choruses are in; hymns are out. Feelings are in; facts are out. Melody is in; message is out. Happy is in; holy is out.

Not that these are wrong. Praising God is good. Happiness in the Lord is good. A striking melody is good. But when one good thing excludes another, we always lose.

For example, when the medium overpowers the message, we go around with a happy tune on our lips but little substance in our walk with the Lord.

God is looking for balance in our lives. He wants us to be both happy and holy. He wants us to worship Him. But these days, true worship is sometimes difficult to find among Christians.

We can have a deeper relationship with God through worship, but it will mean getting back to the basics established in His Word. What are they? In what ways did those early Christians, who turned the world upside down, worship God?

Worship is a noble word. It comes to us from the Anglo-Saxon word *weorthscipe*. Eventually this word developed into *worthship* and then into *worship*. Essentially it means to ascribe worth to someone or to attribute value to something.

Today we use the term loosely when we talk about a girl worshipping her boyfriend or a guy worshipping his car. We mean they attribute a high degree of value to that boyfriend or car and therefore pay special attention to the object of their worship.

Occasionally, at least in Great Britain, the word *worship* is used as a title of honor, by which we dignify someone of special importance. I once represented Lincoln, Nebraska, to the mayor of Lincoln, England. Before meeting with him in the 700-year-old town guildhall, I was briefed on

protocol. While I was instructed to refer to him simply as “Mr. Mayor,” I noticed the certificate he presented to me gave his title as “His Worship the Mayor.”

When we approach God, however, we come to the only One worthy of true worship, for He is the only One of supreme worth. In our worship we must focus on the worthiness of the Father, who sent His Son to die on our place and provide eternal life for us.” (*Worship In Spirit And Truth*, p. 3-4).

3) Kroll then highlights 12 avenues or paths whereby we can truly worship the God who alone is worthy of our worship. They are:

- 1) Worship through reverence
- 2) Worship through confession
- 3) Worship through service
- 4) Worship through stewardship
- 5) Worship through prayer
- 6) Worship through praise
- 7) Worship through reading God’s Word
- 8) Worship through preaching God’s Word
- 9) Worship through believers baptism
- 10) Worship through the Lord’s Supper
- 11) Worship through music
- 12) Worship through community

4) Not surprisingly, several of these themes find their validation in this shortest of the psalms of ascent, Psalm 134. Only 3 verses and 42 words in the *New King James Version*, it is slightly longer than Psalm 117, the shortest psalm and chapter in the Bible. And yet though it is short, it is powerful in its spiritual punch. “Behaving properly in the house of God” or “worship that pleases the Lord” is a vast and important subject wonderfully addressed in this psalm.

5) James Boice notes, “Psalm 134, the last of the Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-34), is about worship. It is also the highest point of ascent in this collection.

The pattern formed by these songs is not perfect, but generally speaking they have progressed from a distant land (Meshech and Kedar, Psalm 120), to the first sight of Jerusalem (Psalm 121), to standing within the city’s gates (Psalm 122), to various reflections on the grace, presence, and blessings of God on his people (Psalms 123-32), to delight in the unity that

prevails among God's people (Psalm 133), to the perpetual and joyful worship of God by those who are appointed to serve him day and night in his temple (Psalm 134). In one sense they are all about worship, but this concluding psalm is so exceptional. It is the climax.

Psalm 134 does not only cap the Songs of Ascents, but it introduces the psalms that follow too, for a call to worship is the chief emphasis of Psalms 135-50. We are alerted to this call from the start since verse 1 of Psalm 134 is immediately echoed in Psalm 135:1-2.

Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD who ministered by night
in the house of the LORD (Ps. 134:1).

Praise the name of the LORD; praise him, you servants of the LORD, you
who minister in the house of the LORD (Ps. 135:1-2).

The opening words of Psalm 134, "Praise the LORD," are the closing theme of the Psalter. They are found seven times in Psalm 135, and the last five psalms both begin and end with "Praise the Lord." (p. 1166).

6) W.T. Conner taught theology for almost 50 years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He called worship "the first business of the church" (*The Gospel of Redemption*, 277). If this is true, what kind of business does Psalm 134 employ us to do?

I. Worship the Lord with your service 134:1

- The psalm begins as it ends with the word "bless." It occurs 3 times, once in each verse.
- Notice also that "worship service" is rendered even at night. Here is "night-shift duty" worth having! And, it is rightly focused on God and not on us! Sadly, we get this wrong far too often.
- Hear the powerful and convicting words of A.W. Tozer, written in 1948! "Thanks to our splendid Bible societies and to other effective agencies for the dissemination of the Word, there are today many millions of people who hold "right opinions," probably more than

ever before in the history of the church. Yet I wonder if there was ever a time when true spiritual worship was at a lower ebb. To great sections of the church the art of worship has been lost entirely, and in its place has come that strange and foreign thing called the “program.” This word has been borrowed from the stage and applied with sad wisdom to the type of public service which now passes for worship among us.” (Boice, 1168).

Programs will entertain people. Worship will exalt our God.

1) **Know who you are**

- The servants here are probably the Levitical priest who would lead the people of God in worship.
- Now, as believer-priest in our Great High Priest, King Jesus, we jointly participate in this glorious worship of our great God. We represent Him. We serve Him. He is first priority. No one compares to Jehovah!

2) **Know what you do**

- The priest in the temple would provide worship 24/7. Why? Because unlike pagan gods who grew tired and needed rest, Yahweh never sleeps (cf Ps. 121:3-4). Day or night God is there. Circle the globe and he is there. When He watches over me at night while I sleep, He is working halfway across the world with my children as they serve Him. Therefore we worship Him with a body presented as a perpetual living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2).
- Our service is not part-time. No temp-service for this God. All of us, all the time!

- Psalm 92:1-2 says, “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night.”

II. Worship the Lord with your prayers

134:2

- R. Kent Hughes, former senior minister of the College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, was exactly right when he wrote, “The unspoken but increasingly common assumption of today’s Christendom is that worship is primarily for *us*—to meet our needs. Such worship services are entertainment focused, and the worshipers are uncommitted spectators who are silently grading the performance. From this perspective preaching becomes a homiletics of consensus — preaching to felt needs — man’s conscious agenda instead of God’s. Such preaching is always topical and never textual. Biblical information is minimized, and the sermons are short and full of stories. Anything and everything that is suspected of making the marginal attendee uncomfortable is removed from the service.... Taken to the nth degree, this philosophy instills a tragic self-centeredness. That is, everything is judged by how it affects man. This terribly corrupts one’s theology.” (Boice, 1168).
- A proper focus on prayer, especially in corporate worship, can help us avoid the wrong emphasis and the corrupt theology Hughes warns us about. Why? Because prayer turns our eyes up not in. It rightly should focus on the Lord and not ourselves.

1) Honor Him in your actions

- Lifting up the hands was a common posture of prayer for the ancient worshippers of God (cf Ps. 28:2; 1 Tim 2:8). Clean hands and a pure heart are a pleasing combination of worship (Ps. 24:4; James 4:8) before our God.

- In the sanctuary of course was the place for corporate worship.
- **Application:** If you raise your hands when you worship why do you do it? If you do not raise your hands when you worship why do you not do it? The attitude of the heart is crucial!

2) **Honor Him with your words**

- For a second time they are called to “bless the Lord.” They are called to worship the Lord. Again, let us draw on the insights of others who have thought long and hard on what authentic worship is.
- “True worship is that exercise of the human spirit that confronts us with the mystery and the marvel of God in whose presence the most appropriate and salutary response is adoring love” (Ralph Martin).
- “Christian worship is the glad response of Christians to the holy, redemptive love of God made known in Jesus Christ” (Horton Davies).
- “Worship, in all its grades and kinds, is the response of the creature to the Eternal” (Evelyn Underhill).
- “Worship quickens the conscience by the holiness of God, feeds the mind with the truth of God, purges the imagination by the beauty of God, opens the heart to the love of God, devotes the will to the purpose of God” (William Temple).
- Out of such heartfelt worship and adoration and love, we open our mouths and bless the Lord. We tell Him, we tell others, He is my God. He is my Lord.

III. Worship the Lord with your humility

134:3

- Who is this God we worship? Listen to our confession of faith, the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

- Psalm 134 closes by briefly, but clearly, highlighting two marvelous attributes of this Great God. Note, we bless Him in vs. 1-2. Now, He blesses us in vs. 3. Who is this God who blesses us?

1) **Acknowledge Him as your Creator**

- Here we are carried back to Genesis 1-2; Psalm 19; Psalm 139.
- God is my maker. I am His to do with as He wishes.

2) **Acknowledge Him as your King**

- Here we are carried back to Psalm 2 (esp. v. 6)!
- We are indeed blessed from Zion, for out of Zion comes Yahweh's King! His Son! This anticipates the New Testament revelation of what we will eternally experience.
- Hebrews 12:22-24 says, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."

Conclusion

At the age of 19 God got hold of my life. I had not walked with Him as a teenager. Suddenly, I felt all clean and brand new as I experienced His forgiveness and felt His sweet presence moment by moment. I will never forget my first Christian concert. We went to downtown Atlanta to hear Andrae Crouch. That night I heard him sing a short praise song. It is not

profound, but it has stuck with me all these years. The words are simple like Psalm 134. The song is short like Psalm 134. And, the message is strong like Psalm 134.

Bless His Holy Name

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, Bless His holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, Bless His holy name.

He has done great things, he has done great things,
He has done great things, Bless His holy Name.