

A CALL TO WORSHIP
Psalm 95

Intro: "Worship" is probably one of the most misused words in the vocabulary of church people. We talk about worshipping, or going to a worship service, but very few know what it is to worship. We know that it has something to do with God, but it is very unusual to find a person who truly worships God.

This word is found in verse 6 of Psalm 95. The same word appears again in the ninth verse of Psalm 96.

The root meaning of this Hebrew verb, שָׁחָה, is to sink down, or to bow down. Thus, at the outset we have the idea of humbling ourselves before the One we worship. And the idea in humbling is not just to kneel or to lie prostrate before the One we worship, but to submit ourselves to Him, to declare our allegiance, our loyalty, to Him. Thus, one essential part of worship is our intention to obey the One we worship. We do Him homage, that is, we honor Him. We show our love, our devotion, for Him. And we tell Him why we love Him. We speak of His glorious attributes, and of His mighty works. A person who worships the Lord is absorbed, is taken up, with the Lord.

All of this was in the mind of Abraham when he went to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice to the Lord. When he and Isaac left the young men behind while they went up to Moriah, Abraham said to them,

Abide ye here with the ass;
and I and the lad will go yonder and worship,
and come again to you (Gen. 22:5).

Abraham intended to show the Lord how much he loved the Lord, and how much he intended to be faithful to the command of the Lord. In view of our definition, I think that you can see that Abraham did not begin to worship when he got to Mount Moriah; he was worshipping the Lord all the way as he went to the place of sacrifice. The actual sacrifice was the high point of his worship, but he was worshipping the Lord by his obedience as he, Isaac, and the two young men went to the place where the Lord had told him to sacrifice Isaac.

And do you remember how the Lord stopped the killing of Isaac, and what it was that He said? He called him twice by name, and then He said,

Lay not thine hand upon the lad,
neither do thou any thing unto him:
for now I know that thou fearest God,
seeing thou hast not withheld thy son,
thine only son from me (Gen. 22:12).

This ought to help us also with what it means to fear the Lord. The person who truly fears the Lord, worships the Lord, loves the Lord, humbles himself before the Lord, is submissive to the Lord, declares his loyalty, his allegiance, to the Lord. Worshiping the Lord is a testimony that the Lord means more to us than anyone else. We are recognizing that we belong to Him, and that we intend to live our lives serving Him.

When the Devil tempted the Lord by saying that he would give the Lord all of the kingdoms of the earth if the Lord would fall down and worship him, the Lord responded,
 Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written,
 Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,
 and him only shalt thou serve (Matt. 4:10).
 For the Lord to have done what the Devil wanted Him to do would have meant turning His back completely upon the Father.

Years ago I heard a young man speaking to a group of young people who said, "We not only need to have our devotional times, but we need to live devotional lives."

The same thing can be said about worship. We not only need daily times when we worship the Lord, but we need to live lives of continual worship. What do you think it means to the Lord that we may have been ignoring Him all week, and then we come to church and sing some wonderful hymn of worship as though that is the way we had been living all week. Worship can be an act, but it must be more than an act; IT MUST BECOME FOR ALL OF US A WAY OF LIFE!

E. M. Bounds, in his wonderful book on prayer, tells this story about a man I am not acquainted with. His name would indicate that he was French, and he seems to have been a rich man. But those details are beside the point. The thing which Mr. Bounds said about him is the important thing. This is what he wrote about him:

The Marquis DeRenty, to whom Christ was most precious, ordered his servants to call him from his devotions at the end of half an hour. The servant at the time saw his face through an aperture. It was marked with such holiness that he hated to arouse him. His lips were moving, but he was perfectly silent. He waited until three half hours had passed; then he called him, when he arose from his knees, , saying that the half hour was so short when he was communing with God (pp. 41, 42).

We must not expect to get to a place like that in a day, or even a week or a month or possibly even in a year. In fact, it is not a good thing to try to duplicate someone else's experience. But I mention this as an illustration of

worship. The Marquis was so completely absorbed in worshiping the Lord that he did not know that his half hour with the Lord had actually been an hour and a half!

Can you and I honestly sing those words of Fanny Crosby's hymn, I Am Thine, O Lord, the verse that goes like this?

O the pure delight of a single hour
That before Thy throne I spend,
When I kneel in prayer, and with thee, my God,
I commune as friend with Friend!

I hope that you understand a little better what it means to worship the Lord. But now let us take this definition to Psalm 95.

There are two parts to this Psalm:

- 1) A twofold, loving exhortation (vv. 1-7a).
- 2) A warning (vv. 7b-11). And you will probably recognize this warning as one that was quoted by the Apostle Paul in chapters 3 and 4 of Hebrews.

Let us look first at:

I. THE TWOFOLD, LOVING EXHORTATION (Psa. 95:1-7a).

I call them loving exhortations because there is nothing here of a harsh, legalistic kind of command. This is the pleading of the Psalmist who had found such great delight in knowing and loving the Lord that he was calling upon others to join with him in worshiping the Lord.

Twice he said, "O come..." You see it in verse 1, and then again in the verse which is really my text tonight: verse 6.

Now we can see from this that worship is not just an individual act, but we can worship God, and should worship God, with others who love Him.

It seems to me that verse 6 gives us the main exhortation while verse 1 tells how we can worship God. We worship God in song. That is the emphasis in verses 1 and 2. (Read.)

You know, one of the things that is happening in our churches which causes me great distress is that it seems as though the hymn book is on the way out. Young people today are not learning the great hymns of the church. They do not know what it is to sing the Psalms. Some of you may live to see the day when it will not be possible to buy a hymn book. But I'll tell you this: All of us will thank the Lord for the rest of our lives, and even in eternity, for the way Dr. Lockwood has so faithfully taught us the wonderful hymns that

we sing here at Trinity! Your Bible and your hymn book are all you need to worship the Lord. We don't sing at Trinity just waiting for others to join us before we turn to the Word. Our singing is a very vital part of our worship service. Sing to the Lord. Sing joyfully to Him. As we come to church let us come with thanksgiving in our hearts and express it in singing.

The second part of this exhortation tells us why we should sing to the Lord. (Read verses 3-5.)

We have "a great God"! He is sovereign over all other gods--and there are many gods which people worship today. And there is probably nothing that will make us realize how great He is than to remember what He had to do to save us (see verse 1), and, at the same time, to contemplate the glory of God as our Creator and the Creator of this world in which we live.

Don't let some teacher of evolution rob you of the glorious truth that our God is the One Who has made us, and everything around us which is so necessary for our lives and for our joy.

Then, as we come to verse 6 we have our CALL TO WORSHIP!

It is not a bad idea at all, especially when you pray at home, to get on your knees. Let this be an expression of your love for the Lord, your submission to Him, and your gratitude for the relationship that you have with Him. In verse 1 He is "the rock of our salvation." In verse 6 He is "our Maker." In verse 7 "he is our God," and, since we are "the sheep of his hand, He is our Shepherd. And all of these are reasons for us to worship the Lord.

Therefore, when the Psalmist says, "Come," come to sing, come to worship, make sure that you come! By the grace of God, do what you are exhorted to do.

But now let us look at the warning.

II. THE SOLEMN WARNING (Psa. 95:7b-11).

I will have to confess to you that it was only recently that I believe that I have come to understand the relationship of the latter part of this Psalm to the first part. It has seemed to me that they really ought to be two Psalms. But now I see that they are just one.

The last part of this Psalm is quoted in Hebrews 3, with a brief reference to it in Hebrews 4. In Hebrews 3 the words

in the latter part of Psalm 95 are attributed to the Holy Spirit, while in Hebrews 4 we are told that the Lord spoke through David. And so, although no author of Psalm 95 is mentioned in the book of Psalms, yet we know that it was written by David under the direction of the Holy Spirit. So we can say positively that it was David who issued this call to worship the Lord. King David, who probably knew more about worship than any man who has ever lived (with the exception of our Lord), has issued this CALL TO WORSHIP!

Now, to give you added evidence that these words are more than the words of David, I want you to look at the last part of verse 7. He said there that what he had written in the first six and one-half verses was actually the voice of the Lord. HERE IS A GREAT OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE THAT THE SCRIPTURES ARE THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD. David was writing what he wanted to write. But it was not just a message from David; David was writing as a spokesman for the Lord. So, while this CALL TO WORSHIP came from David, it also and primarily came from the Lord Himself! It would have been important for us to listen to David's words if they were only his words, but when you see that he was writing the words of God, then they become infinitely more important, and more than ever binding upon us. The point is that God wants us to worship Him!

So our response tonight is very important. If we do not make sure that we are worshiping the Lord, we are hardening our hearts against the Word of God.

And what is the illustration that David gave here, on behalf of the Lord, to show what happens when the people of God stop, or maybe never even start, worshiping the Lord. It is illustrated by what happened to the children of Israel after they left Egypt and made their way to Canaan.

What was the basic cause of all of the sins they committed, of all of their unbelief, of all of the troubles they had? Our Psalm here tells us that it was because they quit worshiping the Lord. For forty years the Lord was grieved with a nation of people who really refused to worship Him. And this was the cause of all of their troubles. Even while Moses was in Mount Sinai getting the Law, what were they doing? They made a golden calf, and worshiped it! There is nothing worse that they could have done. The worship of the Lord is our greatest safeguard against sin. Many of the Lord's people have never even started to worship. Is it any wonder that there is such a lack of real blessing in the church today, and so much formality and corruption among the people of God?

The last verse of our Psalm tell us that the loss we experience because we fail to worship the Lord is a loss of rest and peace and quietness of heart.

Cf. Isa. 26:3, 4. This also is the message of the book of Hebrews, isn't it? How can we learn what is contained in that epistle and not find ourselves on our knees worshipping the Lord? True worship glorifies God, and true worship brings peace and rest to our needy hearts.

Concl: What a wonderful Psalm! And although it was written at least 3,000 years ago, its message is just as needed today, and just as true today, as it ever was. The big question facing all of us is this: Are we going to respond to the invitation of David and of the Lord? Or are we going to harden our hearts by failing to do that which the Lord wants us to do, and that which will keep the joy of the Lord alive in our hearts?

Would you like for your relationship to the Lord to get better each day? Then ask the Lord to help you, and to teach you, what it means to worship Him. He never asks us to do anything but what He will provide the wisdom and the strength to do it.

TRUE WORSHIP

John 4:1-26

Intro: Last week we considered together that wonderful verse found in Psalm 95--the sixth verse:

O come, let us worship and bow down:

let us kneel before the Lord our maker.

We learned that the Hebrew word for "worship" that is used there means to sink down, or to bow down. Therefore, since God is the One we worship, we are to "bow down" before Him. However, since even in OT times God was not satisfied with mere forms of worship, we need to realize that true worship means humbling ourselves before the Lord. And even taking that idea forward, to bow down before the Lord means that we are submitting ourselves to Him. We are committing ourselves to do His will. It means that we give Him the greatest allegiance in our lives. There is no one else to whom we give the same honor--neither kings, nor presidents, nor people in similar places of prominence and/or authority. Such homage is reserved for God alone.

Thus, the primary idea in worship is that our actions are focused upon God Himself. It is not the presentation of our requests that is the main business of worship (although worship does not exclude requests), but it is the adoration of God for all that He is in Himself! We worship Him. We come to delight ourselves in the Lord. There is no higher place to which we can come in our relationship with the Lord than that of worship.

Having said that, we need to recognize also that there is such a thing as false worship.

The people of God in the OT knew that there was one place of worship, and that there were stated seasons when they were to bring their offerings to the Lord. I am speaking of the time following their exodus from the land of Egypt when they were settled in the promised land. And yet even when they came to the right place, the Tabernacle first, and later the Temple, even though they came at the right time with the right sacrifices, they frequently were guilty of displeasing God in the greatest way. The prophet Isaiah delivered a message to the people of Judah which spelled out the displeasure of the Lord in a very specific way. He told them that this is what the Lord had said to him about them:

...this people draw near me with their mouth,
and with their lips do honour me,
but have removed their heart far from me,
and their fear of me is taught
by the precept of men (Isa. 29:13).

Obviously God was very displeased with them, and their

actions had put them in danger of experiencing the judgment of God, not His blessing.

One of the greatest indictments against the false worship of the Lord's people is found in Isaiah 1. Remember now, that the Lord was not speaking of those times when they worshiped false gods, which they did all too frequently. No, He was speaking of the ways in which true worship had been corrupted. Let me read parts of Isaiah 1 to you so that you will see what I am talking about. (Read.) It is one thing not to know how to worship God, but it is something else when the Lord's people know, but do not do what they are supposed to do.

What was wrong? They had spiritual heart trouble. Their worship had continued, but their lives were corrupted, and such worship, while we may call it worship, can never satisfy God.

Tonight I want to take you to John 4. In that passage we have the story of our Lord's contact with a Samaritan woman. It was not by chance that the Lord met her; it was a divine appointment. The Apostle John said in verse 4, "And he," that is, our Lord, "must needs go through Samaria." Although she was a Samaritan, it becomes evident as the story progresses that she was one who had been chosen of God for salvation.

She was a woman with two sides to her life. On the one hand she had had five husbands. So it is clear that her personal life was in disarray. Added to that and on the same side was the fact that she was just living with a sixth man, but she was not married to him. The other side of her showed that she did have some religious training and practice. She knew about worship. She believed that the Messiah was coming.

However, when it became apparent that the Lord knew all about her, how many husbands she had, and what her home life was when He was talking with her, she turned to the subject of worship.

I used to think that she was trying to change the subject when she introduced the subject of worship, but in my later years I have been inclined to doubt this. Obviously she was a woman who was looking for happiness and security or she would not have been married that many times. But she was disillusioned about marriage. She had not found happiness there. However, it would seem that she had a religious side, had probably been going "to worship" as her fathers had taught her, thinking that she would find peace in worship. But that had not satisfied her either. And maybe, and I say

— maybe, she had even thought of becoming a Jewish proselyte thinking that if she joined with the Jews she might find peace in her relationship with God. But there was one question that was still bothering her. And that had to do with the place of worship! Was it right to worship in Mount Gerizim, as her fathers had said, or would it have been better for her if she worshiped in Jerusalem with the Jews.

Thinking that the Lord must be a prophet since He knew so much about her, she decided to ask Him for an answer.

Notice in her inquiry she simply talked about worship. She did not say that she was worshipping God. She was not concerned about the one she would be worshipping; she was just concerned about worshipping. She was like the people who have all kinds of problems in their lives, and so they decide to go to church. They don't talk about getting right with the Lord; they think that there is something magical about being in a church. Such an idea shows how confused they are.

Well, the Lord certainly must have startled her with His answer. His answer is recorded in verses 21 through 24.

— I want you to notice four things about in our Lord's answer, one point in each of the four verses from verse 21 through 24. And they are all very important for us to understand about worship.

I. WHEN WE THINK OF WORSHIP, WE SHOULD NOT THINK PRIMARILY ABOUT THE PLACE OF WORSHIP, BUT ABOUT THE PERSON WE WORSHIP (John 4:21).

Formerly the place had been important, very important. But that was to be changed. We will see in just a moment what that change was to be.

But there is another thing that is important in this verse. Will you notice that the Lord did not use the term God; He spoke of worshipping "the Father." Why did He do this?

I do not claim to know all of the reasons, but I am strongly inclined to believe that the Lord was telling her that you cannot worship God at all unless He is your Father. You need to be His child. That is the reason He had been talking to her about drinking "the living water." This woman was overlooking her own need in her desire to find peace and joy in life. She needed to be saved! She needed to become a child of God! She needed to know that God was her Father.

That is where we all must start. There can be no true worship apart from salvation. That is where countless

numbers of people are making a major mistake. They think that they need to go to some place to worship. What they need is a changed heart.

The second point:

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF TRUE WORSHIP COMES FROM GOD HIMSELF
(John 4:22).

Why did the Jews have access to the true knowledge about worship, but the Samaritans did not? It was because the revelation of God had been given to the Jews.

We know that the Samaritans had some parts of the OT, but it is not enough just to have the books. People needed the blessing of the Lord in order to understand it, and this is what the Samaritans did not have.

What should our Lord's words in this verse mean to us? They should tell us that the true knowledge of worship comes from one place: the Word of God. Paul said that to the Jews were committed the oracles of God, and it had to be helped primarily by them. So this Samaritan woman was on the right path when she began to think that the Jews might have the answer that she needed. She did not realize that, although they had the Word of God, they were really not paying much attention to it, and so they were in as much trouble as she was.

Don't look to any church to teach you how to worship God unless that church will take you to the Word of God. That is where we will find the answer.

Let us go on to the third point:

III. WITH THE COMING OF CHRIST THE NATURE OF TRUE WORSHIP
WAS TO BECOME CLEARER THAN IT EVER HAD BEEN BEFORE
(John 4:23).

Two things are here:

- A. "True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

The act of worship is not always worship. There is true worship, but there is also false worship. True worshippers will worship "in spirit and in truth." Let me hold comment on that until we get to the next verse.

The second thing the Lord said here was this:

- B. "The Father seeketh such to worship him."

Man was created to glorify God. Man was created to worship God. But He does not want just a formal, ritualistic kind of worship. He seeks for, and delights in, those who will worship Him "in spirit and in truth."

Therefore, we can be sure that when we worship God as our Father in the way He intends for us to worship Him, our worship can be a source of great delight to God. Then He will be not only pleased with us, but wellpleased.

But let us go on to verse 24.

IV. THE CLARIFICATION OF OUR LORD'S WORDS ABOUT WORSHIP (John 4:24).

The truth about worship can only be understood when we understand the nature of God. Lit., God is Spirit. He is not limited to a body such as you and I are. We can only be in one place at one time. If we are here, we are not somewhere else. But God is omnipresent. He is everywhere present in the completeness of His Person. When we dismiss tonight, we do not leave God here. Nor is He forced to make a decision about where He will go, which one of us He will go home with. He goes with all of us. And not only with all of us, but with every child of God wherever he might be throughout the world. He is a Spirit Being.

Now He always has been what He is now. God never changes. He was Spirit in OT times. But that truth about God was not as clear as it became after the coming and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Samaritans were receiving the Gospel, and the Gentile nations were to receive the Gospel. And since God must be worshiped "in spirit and in truth," it means that He must be worshiped everywhere, at all times, and genuinely, sincerely, faithfully—and all in accordance with the Word of God.

Concl: And so what did this mean?

It spoke of the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile world. It emphasized once again that true worship must be carried on at all times in the hearts of the Lord's people, and that, in our relationship with the Lord there is nothing that the Lord delights in more than He does our worship.

The Laodicean church had lost sight of this, and so we have our Lord's words to them in Rev. 3:20. (Quote.)

How it behooves all of us to make sure that our worship is what the Lord wants it to be—not just outward acts in certain places, but continually coming from our hearts.

WHERE WORSHIP BEGINS

Romans 12:1, 2

Intro: In both of the messages which I have given on the subject of worship we have seen that God wants us to be worshipers. My first message was on Psa. 95:6 where we have A CALL TO WORSHIP. It was not just David's idea that the people of God should worship the Lord, but it was David speaking by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we know that if we would please the Lord we must worship the Lord. In that verse we have to think in terms of specific acts of worship, such as when we bow down before the Lord, or when we kneel before Him. Both ideas are expressed in the verse.

Last week, in speaking about our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria which is recorded for us in John 4, we saw that the Lord told her that the Father seeks worshipers, those who will "worship him in spirit and in truth." So I repeat: Worship is not just a good idea, nor is it left to be an option for us to decide. It is clear from Scripture that we cannot please God unless we are worshipping Him.

Furthermore, we learned that worship is not just saying a prayer, nor singing a hymn (although worship certainly includes both). Worship is to be for us as the people of God a way of life.

This morning in considering the first part of Hebrews 13 we came across the word "conversation." I told you that the Greek word which was translated "conversation" when the KJV was written does not mean our talk (although this is included), but it really means the way we live. And since the way we live is evidence of what we are, the word indicates that we must be right in our hearts in order to be right in our lives.

So I can say that our "conversation," our manner of life, is to be one of worshipping God. While we engage in acts of worship, it is most important that our worship be more than an act. It is to be our way of life. I hope we all understand that. That is one reason the Lord said that we must worship the Father "in spirit and in truth."

My text for tonight will lay greater emphasis upon this point. Please turn to two very familiar verses in the book of Romans: Romans 12:1, 2. (Read.)

I memorized these verses years ago, and I know that many of you have known them for a long time, depending upon how old you are. They are verses which every Christian should commit to memory. And so if you don't know them, I hope you will

make memorizing them one of your projects for this week.

Now you would have every reason to ask me, "Where do you find anything about worship in these two verses?"

I find it in the last three words of verse 1: "Your reasonable service."

If you read this verse in the NIV you will find that it is translated "your spiritual worship." The NASB renders it "your spiritual service of worship." It is a priestly service which Paul had in mind. It is "reasonable" because it follows as the spiritual consequence of what the Lord has done for us in saving us. The Bible teaches us our bodies are included in our salvation. These bodies of ours are to be glorified. Paul told the Corinthian church in his first epistle that they were not their own. They had been bought with a price. And so they were to glorify God in their bodies as well as their spirits which belong to God, not to themselves.

Let me tell you something else about this expression, "reasonable service."

The "service" that Paul was speaking about was priestly service. And although Paul did not emphasize the point here, the only way you can offer priestly service or worship to God is if you are a priest! It was the function of the OT priest to worship God. To do this he had certain prescribed sacrifices which he was to present to the Lord at stated times. Since Christ died, we all have become priests. We have sacrifices to offer, not the kind of sacrifices that were offered in the OT, but special sacrifices. We are going to learn about some of those sacrifices as we get farther into Hebrews 13 in our Sunday morning services. But the sacrifice that Paul mentioned in Rom. 12:1 is the basic sacrifice. The value of all other sacrifices depends upon whether or not we have made, and continue to make, this sacrifice.

What is the sacrifice? It is the sacrifice of our bodies. It is the presentation of ourselves to God as "a living sacrifice"--all that we are, all that we do, all that we ever hope to be!

I am not going to go into all of the details of these two verses tonight. If I can help you to see what this sacrifice is, why we need to make it, and at least a little of what it means, then our time will have been well spent.

To ask us to present our bodies to God is a big request. All of us are naturally reluctant to put ourselves without some

reservations into someone else's hands. Our bodies actually include everything. What right does the Lord have to make such a request of us?

Let me show you first:

I. THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS REQUEST.

Look at the first part of verse 1--down to the word "sacrifice." (Read.)

Notice that the gracious way that the Apostle Paul stated this. He did not lay the law down to the Roman believers to whom he was writing. He used a word of entreaty, a gentle word of persuasion, and perhaps even carrying with it an indication that he had been praying that this is what every one of them would do. How loving and gracious are those words, "I beseech you therefore, brethren." How different that is from the Mosaic Law. His words would seem to indicate, "You can do what I'm asking you to do, but if you don't want to, you don't have to do it."

However, he put some teeth into his plea when he added those words, "by the mercies of God." What was he referring to when he spoke of "the mercies of God"?

Well, the word "therefore" would link together what he was saying in chapter 12 with what he had been writing about before he got to this point in his epistle. "The mercies of God" have to do with God's provision for them, and for us, in salvation.

Actually this is the only time that Paul used this particular word for mercy in the book of Romans. According to one authority on the Greek language it means "the inward feeling of compassion which abides in the heart." "The mercies of God" are the manifestation of a very special attribute of God. He set His love upon us. He could not let us die in our sins. And so He sent His Son as proof of His love to do everything for us to prepare us for glory. And we could have done none of this for ourselves. He has declared us righteous. He has made full provision for our sanctification, and also for our glorification. He has done this for Jews and Gentiles of His own choosing. When Christ went to the Cross, He went there for us! And so the Apostle Paul used this as the basis for His plea.

The work of Christ in His death and resurrection, with all that has been provided for us, is Paul's appeal to us as to why we need to present this sacrifice. It carries with it the argument that He gave all for us to have all; should we

not present ourselves to Him.

But let us go on to consider:

II. THE SACRIFICE.

It is "your bodies a living sacrifice." Paul was not asking those early Christians to die for the Lord (although some undoubtedly did). He was asking them to live for the Lord. He was asking them to give themselves to the Lord for the rest of their lives, never to recall it, and never to forget what they had done.

All of the truth of the first eleven chapters gives us the foundation. Verses 1 and 2 of chapter 12 tell us about the primary sacrifice which you can I need to make, our "spiritual worship." And then the rest of the epistle tells us what it means to become "a living sacrifice" devoted to the worship of God. Or, to state it another way, the rest of the book tells us how to live so as to please God.

Our purpose in presenting this sacrifice is to seek by God's grace to be "holy," and so be "acceptable," or well-pleasing, to God. What a difference it will make in our lives when we see what it is that the Lord wants us to be and do! Our first and primary concern in all that we do every day of our lives should be to please God. We are to please Him in what we are, in what we say, in what we think, in where we go, in how we conduct ourselves. The offering of this sacrifice really determines the value of our worship. Remember that the value of our worship is based upon our relationship with the Lord.

But after the presentation is made, what must follow?

III. OUR DAILY WALK (Rom. 12:2).

There is a negative side, and there is a positive side. There are things that we cannot do, and there are other things that we must do.

First,

A. The negative side: "And be not conformed to this world."

The territory and environment where we are to live lives of worshiping God, is not friendly territory. The world itself is a wonderful place. It is the creation of God. But a hostile force has taken over. Godlessness prevails. Men do not give God a thought unless it is to keep Him out of their

lives. We are here to bear witness to the people who live in this world. And the tendency of many is to make our lives as much like theirs so it will be easier for us to reach them, and for them to come to Christ.

Let me ask you a question: Do you think that Paul had a burden to reach the people of the world? I am sure you would answer, "Yes. There is no doubt about that?" Let me ask you another question: Do you think that he had a greater burden than you have to see people saved? I don't know how you would answer that, but I would have to say "yes" again.

All right, then let us believe that he knew what he was talking about when he said, "And be not conformed to this world."

What does this mean?

It means that you and I are not to fashion our lives after the pattern which the world is following at any particular time. Some feel that they can go so far--in dress, in speech, to some extent in pleasures, but then stop short of doing all that the world does. Paul said in so many words, "Don't even start in that direction." It won't accomplish what you think it will. Our business is to please God, not compromise with men. We need to show people that being a Christian is distinctively different from anything that you will find in the behavior of those who do not know the Lord.

Along this line, read 2 Cor. 6, and then see whether or not you have been compromising with the Word and will of God.

But there is also a positive side to our worship.

B. The positive side: "But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

One thing that some Christians never do is that which Paul tells us to do in this verse. We need to be transformed. Paul used a word here which we have brought into our English language and called a metamorphosis. It speaks of a change, an inner change that will manifest itself outwardly. It is like a tadpole become a frog, or a larva coming out of a cocoon as a beautiful butterfly.

And from the human side, what is involved in this change? It means a "renewing" of our minds. It means that we learn to think about things, not from the world's way, but from God's way. Our thinking needs to be renovated. Our thinking needs

to be brought in line with the Word of God. We need to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." It means that we are going to give the Word of God a daily test in our lives with the certain prospect of showing that under any and every circumstance, God's will is best!

Have you ever done that? The Lord wants us to test His Word. He knows it will stand every test you give it because He stands behind it. Don't follow those who will give you advice which is not based upon the Word of God. You and I get ourselves into a lot of trouble because we are not working on that inward renewal of our thoughts which leads to the transformation of our outer lives. Go by the Word of God and you will never be disappointed. Remember what the Lord told Joshua when He gave Joshua as big a job as any man ever had. Cf. Joshua 1:8. That is the word for you and for me as well, even in this so-called sophisticated generation in which we live.

Concl: Where does worship begin? It begins in our hearts, not as they were when we were saved, but as they have become as a result of what God by His mercies has done, and continues to do, in each of our lives.

EXALTING THE NAME OF THE LORD
Psalm 34:3

Intro: Although I did not plan to have a connection between my message this morning, and my message tonight, there is one, a very close one. In fact, there might be times when they would be inseparable. This morning, in speaking about "the sacrifice of praise" (Heb. 13:15), the emphasis Paul was making was more upon gratitude for the continual flow of the blessings of the Lord into each of our lives. Tonight we are thinking more about worshiping the Lord as a Person. The verse I have chosen as my text is found in Psa. 34:3,

O magnify **the Lord** with me,
and let us exalt **his name** together.

Spurgeon, in his Treasury of David, Vol. I, p. 122) points out that the first part of this Psalm (vv. 1-10) is a hymn, while the latter part of the Psalm is a sermon (vv. 11-22).

The superscription of the Psalm which is found in most of our Bibles tells us that this Psalm was written after David was delivered from Abimelech, the king of Gath, one of the major cities of the Philistines. This was the time that David pretended that he was insane (1 Sam. 21:10-13), and was able to get away safely. Achish, who was the Abimelech (a title like Pharaoh) at the time, could have turned David over to Pharaoh, but he did not do that.

David has been criticized by many expositors for what he did, but David, while it could have been a lapse of faith, saw in it the protecting and delivering hand of the Lord. And he was so conscious of the Lord's blessing that he wanted others to join with him in magnifying and exalting the name of the Lord.

Charles Simeon had this to say about what David was doing in this Psalm:

A sense of gratitude to God for his mercies will ever abide in some measure on the soul of a true believer. But there are special occasions whereon he is so impressed with the Divine goodness, that he feels as if he never could forget it, and as if he would have the whole creation join with him in his devout acknowledgments (Vol. 5, p. 233).

This was how David felt.

You know how you feel when you have been spared a serious accident, or when some loved one has been raised up from some

illness. You feel as though you could never praise the Lord enough, and so you want others to join with you in exalting the name of the Lord. This is what David was doing.

I think that standing by a hospital bed I have read this Psalm more than any other. It is a very encouraging Psalm because, as we read it, we become convinced that what the Lord did for David, He can and might do for us! It is definitely a Psalm in which David was exalting the Lord for answered prayer.

And yet it seems that the Lord had done something else for David through this experience that amounted to more than just a Psalm praising God for His blessing. Our text shows that in some special way it had focused David's attention upon the Person of God, i.e., the greatness and glory of his God. See vv. 4, 8, 9, 10. It is one thing to want some blessing from the Lord; it is a step higher to find that your trouble has caused you to delight in the Lord, even more than in His blessing.

But let us look at our text.

The two parts of the verse express essentially the same ideas. There is a close connection between magnifying and exalting. We would also have to say that it is impossible to separate "the Lord" from "his name." And then the appeal of the verse is for others to join with the Psalmist (in this case, David), and so he said in the first part of the verse "with me"; in the latter part of the verse, "let us... together." Besides being poetic in form, the double statement tends to intensify the desire of the Psalmist. As Mr. Simeon said, it was as though David would never get finished exalting the Lord, nor be able to magnify Him enough, and so he was calling upon the people of God to join with him in worshipping the Lord.

It is not my purpose tonight to deal with all of this Psalm, nor even with all of the first part, the hymn, verses 1 through 10. But in preparation for looking into verse 3, let me ask you to notice what David said in verse 2.

I. HIS BOAST (Psa. 34:2).

Boasting is a word which, at least for us in the twentieth century, carries a bad connotation. We link boasting and bragging, and usually the person who boasts about something is a proud person. He, or she, is not the kind of a person you enjoy being around. And we ought to be reminded of that verse in Proverbs which says,

Pride goeth before destruction,

and a haughty spirit before a fall (Prov. 16:18).

What things are people inclined to boast in?

A man may boast in his strength and/or in his good looks. A lady may boast in her beauty and/or in her lovely clothing. The scholar may boast in his brain power. The rich man may boast in his riches. The person in a place of great power may boast in his authority. The athlete may glory in his ability and in his trophies. Parents may boast about their children, or their grandchildren. Children may boast about their parents. We can boast about our possessions, such as a new home, or a new car. We all are guilty of boasting. And we hear it all of the time.

In our corrupt society we frequently hear people doing what Paul said people do who do not know the Lord: They glory in their shame. They glory in their sins.

All through Scripture we are warned about pride! This has been called the root sin because of what we read in 1 Tim. 3:6--that bishops or elders are not to be novices, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Pride was the reason for the downfall of Satan. Pride and boasting can make its way into the pulpit. A preacher can boast of his knowledge, or of his achievements, or of his listeners, or his books.

Boasting is a way of life human beings. There probably isn't a day but what we do a little boasting ourselves, or hear someone else boasting.

However, whenever you hear someone speak like David did here in verse 2 of Psalm 34, you can be sure that God has been at work in his heart. Not all of us as the Lord's people talk like this, or like the Apostle Paul when he said. "Of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities" (2 Cor. 12:5b).

Paul also taught the Corinthians who seemed to be especially inclined toward boasting that the Lord had chosen the people He has chosen "that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Cor. 1:29). And then he quoted from that great passage on humility in Jer. 9:23, 24 when he said,
That, according as it is written,
He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord
(1 Cor. 1:31).

The Lord often has to lead us through many troubles before we can come to the place where we can say, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," and really mean it! That is the language of grace.

One problem about such language is that it is not popular in the world. That, in the world's terms, means that a person has low self-esteem, or a poor self-image. But that is the language of heaven. This was what Paul was teaching the Corinthian believers when he said,

For who maketh thee to differ from another?
and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?
now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory,
as if thou hadst not received it? (1 Cor. 4:7).

Actually there is nothing more offensive to a boaster. Even people who usually boast can only take so much boasting from someone else.

But David said, and we know that it is true, "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad" (Psa. 34:2b).

Who are "the humble"?

They are the people of God who have learned what David had learned, or who, at least, were learning it. There is nothing that is more genuinely attractive than genuine humility. Do you remember what the Lord said in Matt. 11:28-30? "Come unto me, all ye that labour..."

See also Psa. 34:18.

When David spoke of himself in Psalm 34 he used this term: "The poor man" (v. 6). He knew that he had nothing in himself, that all of his security and all of his hope for time and eternity were in the Lord! No person is truly humble until he sees what he is before God. Cf. Isa. 6 where Isaiah saw the Lord.

And so he asked others to join him in:

II. THE MOST GLORIOUS OF ALL TASKS (Psa. 34:3).

To "magnify" is to make larger. It means to glorify. To "exalt" is to lift up.

How can we make the Lord larger than He is, and how can we lift up the One Whose name is "the most High"?

Think for just a moment about this world in which we live, and the place that the Lord has in the lives of most people.

We find it expressed perfectly in Psa. 10:4 where we find these words:

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance,
will not seek after God:

God is not in all his thoughts.

Man can look at creation and see no evidence of a living God. He can stand by the grave of a loved one, but it does not make him turn to God. Man can deal with AIDS, but never consider that it is a judgment from God. He can grapple with the terrible problems of crime, drugs, and all that goes with them, and never think that the problem might be in man's heart, a problem which only God can meet. Man doesn't think of God except occasionally to blaspheme Him because of something that has gone wrong.

And so what was David saying here?

He was saying that the people of God, individually, but also together, must make God BIG in the eyes of men. We must lift up the One people never see. He must become such a mighty influence in our lives that people will be confronted with the mighty evidence that there is a God, and that we know Him.

More than that, we will need to get our mouths open to speak and to sing of the Lord and His glorious attributes.

What should we make known about the Lord by our lives, and by our words?

Psalm 34 give us much to consider. Note the following:

- 1) He is "the Lord," JEHOVAH, the living God, the eternal God, the self-sufficient God.
- 2) He is powerful. See the verses which deal with answered prayer. E.g., v. 4.
- 3) He is good (v. 8).
- 4) He is holy (vv. 11-14, 16).
- 5) He is nigh (v. 18).

This is not all that can be made known about God, but there is plenty in these verses to show how God needs to be magnified and exalted. And David was magnifying the Lord most of all by His worship, giving all of the glory to God, taking none of it for himself.

Concl: This Psalm was written 1,000 years before Christ came to earth as a Man. The Lord Jesus magnified and exalted God more than anyone ever has, and more than anyone ever could. But the need for "magnifiers" and "exalters" has never been greater than it is today. We live in a pagan society. People do not go to church. They do not read the Bible. God has many ways of making Himself known to them, but the primary way that He has chosen is to show Himself in the lives of His people.

Take this verse as though it had been spoken directly to you by David. I must do the same. But I will tell you something else that you can do. We can take this verse as spoken directly from God to you and to me. David was writing the Word of God. How wonderful it would be if this week you and I would live in such a way, and talk in such a way, that people would be made to realize that there is a God, that He is far greater than they could ever have imagined, and that they desperately need Him!

It can't be something that we do ourselves. It can't be forced upon people. The Lord must give them eyes to see, and ears to hear. And when they do, then they will say what the men of Samaria said to the Samaritan woman with whom the Lord spoke at the well of Sychar:

Now we believe, not because of thy saying:
for we have heard him ourselves,
and know that this is indeed the Christ,
the Saviour of the world (John 4:42).

Let us never forget to offer to God "the sacrifice of praise" for all of His blessings upon us. Let that be continual. But let us take a step upward as well, and learn what it is to delight ourselves in the Lord Himself.

Illus: I have given this illustration before, but it bears repeating, and is especially appropriate concerning Psalm 34.

When I went off to Baylor University after high school, I had the privilege of sitting under a very godly teacher by the name of Dr. J. B. Tidwell. He was an old man at the time, but was still being used in the lives of students, and in the lives of the Lord's people wherever he preached.

One Saturday he was in his study preparing to preach the next day when he heard a gentle knock on his study door. He tried to ignore it, but the knocker persisted. He knew that it was his little pre-school boy. Finally, Dr. Tidwell knew that he would not go away, and so he called out, "What do you want?" His little boy didn't answer; the question was the only invitation that he needed to go into his Daddy's study. So Dr. Tidwell watched the doorknob turn, his little boy came in, and crawled up in his Daddy's lap. Dr. Tidwell repeated his question: "What do you want?" And his little boy, with his arms around his Daddy's neck, said, "I don't want anything, Daddy, I just want you!"

That is what David was saying. The Lord is our Provider. He has heard our prayers, and answered them many, many times. But let us not forget that the Lord wants us to delight

ourselves, not just in His gifts, but in Himself. And may there be many times when we come to the Lord and say, "I don't have any requests to bring, Father, I just came because I want you."

We can't walk on higher ground this side of heaven than when we are magnifying the Lord and exalting His Name in private, and together as we meet, like we are tonight, to worship Him.

"THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS"

Psalm 96:9

Intro: This is an interesting expression, isn't it? "The beauty of holiness." It occurs four times in the OT.

- 1) In our text, Psa. 96:9.
- 2) It is found first in 1 Chron. 16:29 where we learn that Psa. 96 was a part of the Psalm which David composed when he brought the ark of the covenant from the house of Obed-edom into the city of Jerusalem. The original Psalm included parts of Psalm 105 and 106 as well as Psalm 96. (See 1 Chron. 16:23-33 for Psalm 96.)
- 3) In 2 Chron. 20 when Jehoshaphat went out to face the forces of Moab, Ammon, and mount Seir, he must have had Psalm 96 in mind, because he instructed the singers who were to precede the army to "praise the beauty of holiness." See 2 Chron. 20:20, 21.
- 4) We also have this expression in Psa. 29:2 where we read,
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
This is a combination of Psa. 96:8a and Psa. 96:8b.

A marginal reading in my Bible at Psa. 29:2 for "the beauty of holiness" is "in holy adornment."

We know that the OT is full of types and symbols which represent truth which ought to be important to every child of God. Thus, "holy adornment" was a garment, a beautiful garment, which, when worn, was pleasing to God and made the worship of the people acceptable to Him. But the significance of the garment went far deeper than just a glorious ceremony. It was to portray the truth that those who come before the Lord to worship Him must be clothed in a holy character and a holy life.

Therefore, the worship of any individual is not measured by the words he may use (although words are important), nor just by the clothes he or she might be wearing. Worship is acceptable or unacceptable to God in terms of the holiness of the worshiper. The character of the worshiper determines the value of the words he might bring with him. God is concerned about holiness. It is holiness that is beautiful to Him. A holy person is the only kind of a person who can engage in worship that is beautiful, acceptable, pleasing to the Lord.

But what are we to understand by "holiness"?

To be holy is to be pure and clean before the Lord. It describes the person who has separated himself from sin and sinful things, to be devoted to the Lord.

We were talking about holiness this morning when we were considering Paul's prayer for the Hebrew believers. He wanted them to do the will of God, to live their lives in a manner that would be "wellpleasing to the Lord."

- We can never be perfectly holy in our lives as long as we are in our present state, but we can grow in holiness. Holiness can become beautiful to us as it is to the Lord. When we think how much time and money people will spend to make themselves attractive to others, we perhaps have an illustration of the way in which we should seek to be holy and to live in a holy manner before the Lord.

And so to seek forgiveness and cleansing should be the first thing that we are concerned about when it comes to worshipping the Lord. Holiness is what the Lord looks for. It is holiness that makes our worship acceptable to the Lord.

Holiness means doing things God's way and for His glory. When David tried the first time to bring the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem, he failed because he had appointed two men who were not Levites to do the work. Uzza died as a result because he put his hand on the ark to steady it when the oxen stumbled.

Holiness means being Christ-like. The more of Christ that the Father sees in us, the greater is His delight in our worship. He never sees us but "in Christ," but He also wants to see that we are trusting the Lord to work in us, making us in practical matters what He wants us to be.

Now with all of this in mind, let us look at the 96th Psalm itself.

The first thing that we come to is:

I. HOW WE ARE TO WORSHIP (Psa. 96:1-10).

We know that it was written for public worship. It expresses what David understood about true worship.

As I was reading this Psalm several days ago I could not help but notice its similarity with the Psalm which Moses wrote after the children of Israel had safely crossed the Red Sea. You do not find a single mention of Moses; Moses was concerned that their worship, their adoration, their praise, was directed to the Lord alone.

That is what we have here. David did not want any praise himself, even for the idea of bringing the ark back. He wanted the people to praise the Lord, and to praise Him

alone. See the content of the first nine verses. (Read.)

They were to sing. They were to speak. But it was all to be directed to the Lord.

And the burden of David's heart, and he wanted it to be the burden of the hearts of his people, was that the whole earth would join them in worshiping the Lord. See vv. 1, 3. And the same is true even of our text: v. 9.

When we come together on Sundays and Wednesdays we do two things. We do the two things that are mentioned in this Psalm. We speak, speak to each other. We speak to the Lord in prayer. And we sing! But how conscious are we that we need to come "in the beauty of holiness"? How conscious are we that we are to speak and to sing to the glory of God? Do we speak of His works? And do we sing to glorify Him?

You see, all of this is very, very practical, and very important. It is to the Lord that all glory must be given, and we are worshiping the Lord when we are declaring His salvation, His wonders, both here together or wherever we might be. We are not to do this in a sanctimonious way that is going to be offensive to people, but if worship is a part of our lives, we are going to bring the Lord into our conversation wherever and whenever we can.

Look at verse 10. People are doing a lot of thinking these days about the universe. We need to tell them what we know because they are not looking into the Bible for their information. Even our witnessing is to bear the marks of holy worship. We have a great God, and He is deserving of the greatest possible praise. A worshiping heart is a thankful and happy heart.

But now notice how the Psalm ends.

II. ALL OF CREATION WORSHIPS (Psa. 96:11-13).

Paul may have been thinking of passages like this when he wrote the first part of Romans 8. See vv. 18-23. (Read.)

Do you know that at this very moment the heavens and the earth are engaged in worshiping the Lord.? It takes the enlightened minds and hearts of believers to understand this, but it really is going on.

Cf. Psa. 19:1 ff.

Lucille and I were down on the Oregon coast for a few days on our vacation, and one morning as I was listening to the roar

of the waves hitting the shore I read verse 11: "Let the sea roar." And I told Lucille that what we were listening to was the sea praising the Lord. And I really believe that.

A few days later we were traveling up into Washington, and mile after mile we saw new trees growing, trees which had been planted by Weyerhaeuser and perhaps some by Georgia Pacific. One area would have small trees. In another area they were slightly larger. Some of the trees were getting quite large. But there they were in an open area, reaching their heads toward the heaven, and I remembered that I had read that "then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice" (Psa. 96:12). There they were rejoicing in anticipating of the coming of the Lord.

You and I had better be looking for the coming of the Lord because all of creation is looking for that wonderful day when the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

All around us in creation is worship. God has made all things for His glory, but it seems that people are the slowest and the least to worship the Lord.

The sun, as it blazes its way across the heavens, and then so often sinks in the west in such glory, exists for the glory of the Lord. The same is true of the moon, glorifying God.

Concl: I can understand why the heathen do not praise the Lord. They usually are inclined to worship nature rather than the God Who made all of these things. But there is no excuse for those of us who know the Lord. Let us join with all nature in praising the Lord, but let us remember that He seeks holy worshipers. And we must come before Him day by day and moment by moment clothed in the holiness of His dear Son, glorifying Him, exalting Him, giving Him for the glory which belongs only to Him.

May worship have a greater place in all of our lives. We are never closer to what we will be doing in heaven than when we in our singing, our speaking, our living, are seeking to worship the Lord and to give Him the glory for which He is so worthy.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WORSHIP
Ephesians 5:15-21

Intro: I hope that we all know that worship is a very important part of every Christian's life. Worship can be done alone in private. It can be done with others, such as in our families, or with friends. It is also meant to be a very important part of church fellowship. Worship has the Members of the Godhead as its object. We worship God by recognizing His majesty, His glory, and His sovereignty in all things. We can worship on our knees (probably the best way), but that is not always convenient in public. We can worship standing, or walking. Special time can be set aside for worship, or we can worship as we go about our daily tasks. As I have tried to bring out, we can worship God in special places, but worship ought to be a way of life with those of us who know the Lord. The greater our knowledge of the Lord, the more inclined we will be to worship. And then when we think of the Lord's blessings, we worship Him in bringing to Him our thanksgiving for special things that He has done for us.

Paul shows us in his epistles that we can worship the Lord in writing letters. Chapter 1 is practically all worship. The word "blessed" as it used here helps us to identify worship. (Point out worship in Eph. 1:3-14. And then notice how Paul's prayer in the latter part of the chapter ends in worship. He began by interceding, and ends by worshipping.)

We have the same thing in 2 Cor. 1:3 ff. and 1 Pet. 1:3 ff. It would be good to memorize these passages and use them to worship the Lord if we are seeking to learn what it means to worship. We have seen on past Sunday nights that the Psalms provide us with a wonderful place in Scripture where we can worship.

However, it is easy for us to become formal in worshipping the Lord if our worship does not come from our hearts. That was the objection that the Lord had with the children of Judah in Isaiah's day. Cf. Isa. 29:13.

One way we can guard against worship becoming a mere formality is to know that, according to our text for tonight, it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to be genuine in our worship. Strangely it is in that section of Ephesians where the Apostle was dealing with the filling of the Spirit.

When we think of the filling of the Spirit we think of powerful preaching, or we think of a mighty personal witness. Those who are charismatic would say that the filling of the Spirit is demonstrated by speaking in tongues. But Paul,

directed by the Holy Spirit in his writing, indicated that the fullness of the Spirit is manifested in worship. We see this in our text. Let me read verses 15 through 21, and then we will spend our time mainly on verses 18-21. (Read.)

I. THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT (Eph. 5:18).

From what the Apostle Paul said here we must conclude that the filling of the Spirit is the normal Christian life. It was never meant to be for some elite group of Christians. Everybody who knows the Lord is expected to be filled with the Spirit, or, as our text actually could be translated, Keep on being filled with the Spirit. Paul was not telling them to do something that they were not doing; he was telling them to continue on as they were.

To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit. It is to be submissive to the Spirit. It is to be dependent upon the Spirit. And since the Spirit never works apart from the Word of God, of which He is the Author, to be controlled by the Spirit is to be controlled by the Word of God. We are to consciously look to the Holy Spirit for our guidance, for our knowledge of the truth, and for the strength that we need to live the way the Lord wants us to live.

To state the same truth with other words of Scripture, to be filled with the Spirit is to "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16). It means not grieving the Spirit (Eph. 4:30). It means not quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19). It is to experience the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Cf. Gal. 5:22, 23. BUT IT RESULTS IN WORSHIP.

We need to be careful not to expect everything all at once in our relationship with the Spirit. As we grow and mature in the things of the Lord, the work of the Spirit will be more apparent in our lives. What we need to be concerned about is our personal relationship with the Spirit. The evidence of our progress in being filled with the Spirit is something that the Spirit will take care of. It is not for us to do it. So our worship to begin with may be very simple and very brief. But as we continue to depend upon the Holy Spirit, our practice of worship and blessing in worship will certainly increase.

Verses 19 and 20 really have to do with worship, but since Paul included verse 21 as a part of it, I want to include that as well.

What are the results of living under the control of the Holy Spirit?

II. WORSHIPING IN SINGING (Eph. 5:19).

It seems clear that the Apostle must have been referring here to the meeting of the church. Singing has always been a major part of worship for the Lord's people. The book of Psalms in the OT is evidence of that. And this verse in the NT proves that what was done in Israel carried over into the fellowship of the church.

I hope you have been worshiping the Lord in your heart as we have been singing tonight. As we sing, we are speaking, i.e., we are ministering. You may have thought that the speaking began when I started to bring my message, but actually it began with the first words of our hymns which came from our lips. We were all ministering to each other, at least, that is what we are supposed to be doing. We are not all singers, but we are to sing.

And notice: We sing to each other first, and then we sing to the Lord IF it all comes from our hearts.

Many times I have gone to church and have been richly blessed before the message of the evening ever got started, and the blessing came from the hymns that were sung.

The singing of the Lord's people is to be distinctive. When David said that "a new song" had been put in his heart, he did not mean one that had just been written, but he meant a new kind of a song, the kind of a song that you don't hear when you go out into the world. If you read your OT carefully, you will learn that David actually made special instruments for use in praising the Lord, evidently because he did not want to use the world's musical instruments. I am sure that David would be shocked to go into some of our churches and find instruments on the platform which make it look like a dance band had played there or a rock concert had been held in the church. True salvation changes our singing! We are to sing to bless each other, and, if we are singing to bless each other, our singing pleases and glorifies the Lord. What the Lord said about good works, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40b), applies also to singing.

But what are we to be singing?

"Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." What are they?

A. "Psalms."

We have no problem with this. Believers are to sing the Psalms of Scripture. There was a time when it was considered

heresy to sing anything else. I am thankful that our hymn book has many of the Psalms set to music.

B. "Hymns."

- The NT permits the introduction of hymns not contained in Scripture which are addressed specifically to GOD!

Singing in the church is to be God-centered, not experience-centered, or man-centered. Our singing is to turn our hearts to the Lord, to honor Him, to glorify Him.

C. "Spiritual songs."

Some expositors feel that these are terms which can apply to more than one musical piece. For example, a Psalm is often a hymn, and certainly would be a spiritual song.

This latter term opens the way for more music, written later than the Scriptures, but one basic requirement since they are called "spiritual songs," or spiritual odes, it must be music which conforms to the Word of God and the character and teaching of Scripture.

Lenski, a Lutheran commentator, suggests that "making melody" may authorize the use of musical instruments.

However, it all must eventually be that which is "to the Lord."

The Lord never intended that music should be like it is in many places today, so closely patterned to the world's music that you can hardly tell the difference. Christian music, Christian singing, must conform to the Word of God, and must be sung by the Lord's people for the main purpose of glorifying the Lord.

But let us notice what else Paul had to say about worship in this passage. It has to do with:

III. THANKSGIVING (Eph. 5:20).

This can be done with singing, but it is better adapted to our individual blessings when we give verbal expression of thanksgiving to God for what He has done for us.

This is what Paul was doing in Eph. 1, thinking especially about the spiritual blessings that he had in Christ.

Note we are to do this "always for all things." This means the things that we like, and the things that we don't like.

We are to be thankful continually to the Lord for all of His dealings with us. It is never easy to thank God for our trials, but it is in our trials that we learn to know the Lord and to see His faithfulness in working all things out for our greatest and eternal God.

And so we can say that thanksgiving is worship. And it is one phase of worship which is sadly neglected by most of us.

Lastly we come to verse 21.

IV. SUBMISSION TO EACH OTHER (Eph. 5:21).

Is it right for us to say that this is worship? I believe so. There is nothing that delights the heart of God more than for us to be united in our fellowship with each other. Paul had touched on that at the beginning of chapter 4 here in Ephesians. Cf. John 17 and Psalms 133.

We could spend an hour singing the Psalms, and we could express our thanksgiving to the Lord as we are told to do in verse 20, but if we are divided, intent on having our own way, not speaking to each other, all of this spoils what otherwise would bring great glory to the Lord.

So it is not just what we do when we worship the Lord, but how we do it, and what our fellowship is like as we come to worship the Lord. How thankful we ought to be for the fellowship the Lord has given us, and we need to pray that it will continue and grow so that our worship can be pleasing to the Lord Whom we are seeking to worship.

Concl: Remember that true worship is never possible apart from the work of the Holy Spirit--never! We need Him to work in our hearts, and then to work through us so that in our singing, our giving of thanks, and in our submission to each other, we can do what we want to do in worshiping God--and that is to bring the glory and honor to Him for which He is so worthy. May the Lord help us to be true worshipers!