

Passionate Worship – Psalm 96:1-9

Ps 95. We're taking a short break from our study of the Gospel of John to talk about some of the criteria that make for a solid church. Because solid churches don't just happen; just like solid buildings don't just happen. They're *built* on the bedrock of biblical truth, and *grow* on the bedrock of biblical truth.

Back in the day when we bought *this* building, there was a pillar, a structural support, right here (front of the stage). And we knew it had to come out. No problem we thought.

Until we talked to the builder. Who not only had to have a special beam made to span the distance from one side of the stage to the other, but the foundations of the other supports had to be dug up and reinforced. Because weak foundations make for weak buildings.

And the same is true of churches. If we're going to continue as a *solid* church, we have to make sure our foundations are solid. Pausing every now and then for an inspection, and if necessary, reinforcing them. Including the bedrock of passionate worship.

That's the topic this week. The act of focusing our mind's attention, our heart's affection, and our will's submission on God. Worship. And solid churches do it passionately. Instead of just going through the motions, solid churches put their heart into it. And do so for at least six reasons.

1. It's the command of God's Word (Psalm 95:1-2, 6)

Passionate worship is the bedrock of solid churches because God commands it. **Hebrews 12:28** – *Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.* (ESV) As in serious respect and overwhelming amazement. It's a command. *Let us.*

Or how about **Psalm 29:2**? *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name* [ascribe, meaning offer or attribute to God the exaltation he deserves]; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness. His holiness. A setting that *begs* for passion. Like seeing your wife dressed up for a date. In the splendor of her beauty. If that doesn't evoke passion in you, you're either blind or you don't love her.

Same for God. No passion, no love. No passion, no sight. Or at best, you're holding back.

And holding back isn't allowed. *Ascribe* glory, David says. It's a command. Worship the LORD. Just do it. There's no option to sit it out or go through the motions. Passionate worship is *required*. It's what God deserves and what he commands.

And if that's not enough, check out **Ps 95:6** – *Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!* [Worship with passion.] *For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.* It's natural. To worship God passionately is a no-brainer. He's God and we're sheep. He leads and we follow. He blesses and we receive. The command is easy when you see him rightly.

Same in **v1-2**. *Oh come, let us sing to the LORD* [another form of passionate worship]; *let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!* [Joyful] [2] *Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving* [deep-seated gratitude]; *let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!* Songs of adoration and blessing. Exaltation and acclaim.

Far from expressions of boredom, or indifference, or apathy; God commands joyful worship. Grateful worship. Passionate worship. And solid churches obey.

2. It's the desire of God's heart (John 4:23-24)

Passionate worship is the bedrock of solid churches because it's the desire of God's heart. Like a team who goes all out for their coach. Or a band who works hard for their conductor.

When I was in high school, I played the trombone and went to band camp a couple of times. A week-long bootcamp or sorts where we practiced 8-10 hours a day. Sometimes on our own, sometimes in groups or sections, and sometimes as a whole. Expending ourselves and pouring ourselves out because that's what the conductor wanted. He was highly respected and desired our best. Our utmost for his highest.

How much more, God? In worship.

Keep your finger in Psalm 95, and turn with me to John 4.

Jesus is speaking to the woman at the well, and after telling her that in times past the Samaritans got worship wrong and the Jews got it right, he says in v23 – *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers* [Jews, Samaritans, whoever] *will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.* [24] *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*”

The Father is seeking such people to worship him. (23b) Looking for worshippers.

Revealing a *desire* on his part to be worshipped. A *desire* to be exalted. A *desire* to be magnified. And rightfully so, because he deserves it.

But notice he's not looking for worshippers on *their* terms, to worship *their* way; but his. He desires worship *in spirit and truth*.

In truth, as in, based on reality; the biblical record of who he is, what he's done, and what he requires. Not who we *think* he is. Not who we *want* him to be. Not some figment of our imagination based on our culture or lifestyle. He desires worship in *truth*. Based on who he *truly* is. Omnipotent and holy. Loving and just.

He desires worship in truth, and worship *in spirit*. Meaning, from the heart, regardless of location. Look at v21 – *Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain* [Mount Gerizim, in Samaria] *nor in Jerusalem* [on Mount Zion] *will you worship the Father.*

There will come a time he said, when location, location, location doesn't matter. A time when God would *indwell* his people, and receive their worship anywhere, and anytime.

And we're in it. We're *in* that time. *The hour is coming* [Jesus said] *and is now here.* (23) Referring to *his advent*, and the Holy Spirit's presence. Who was first given at Pentecost, and continues to be given every time someone receives Jesus as their Savior. Enabling them to worship anytime any place, regardless of location.

And do so, from the heart. That's the *other* part of worshipping *in spirit*. Regardless of

location, and from the heart. Because *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit*. (24) From your heart to his. Soul to soul. Person to person.

And that, true worship from true worshippers, naturally results in passion. If you truly *love* someone – if you truly *believe* in them, if you're *devoted* to them and connected to them – you'll be passionate about them.

Think marriage again. Or sports fans. People who love their teams are over the top about them. Some even worshipping their team. Same for the groupies who follow pop stars. Look at the mosh pit in front of the stage.

Passionate worship abounds in our world. The very worship *God* desires. And *God deserves*. From our heart to his, with all the passion in the world.

3. It's the pattern of God's people (Psalm 63:1-3)

Passionate worship is the bedrock of solid churches because it's the pattern of God's people. Like the Apostle John in Revelation 1 who fell to his *face* in the presence of Jesus. And the *elders* in his vision who fell down before the throne. (Rev 5:14) And the ruler in Matthew 9 who *knelt* before Jesus.

Even in the Old Testament God's people worshipped passionately. Like it says in Psalm 42 – [1] *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.* [2] *My soul thirsts for God.* (v1-2a) That's passion.

Or how about David in **Psalm 63**? [1] *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.* [2] *So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.* [3] *Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.* (1-3) That's worship. Passionate worship.

As was David's dancing in 2 Sam 6. Having yearned for the Ark of the Covenant, the focal point of God's presence in those days, he worshipped *passionately* when it finally appeared. He *danced before the Lord with all his might*, it says; leaping and shouting.

Passionate worship is the *pattern* of God's people. Old *and* New.

Now, does that mean dancing has to be a part of *our* worship? Or laying prostrate on the floor? No. It's not *prescriptive*, but *descriptive*. It's not a command of what *should* happen, but an example of what *did* happen.

But along with the other passages and examples, it does set a pattern of passion and freedom. To make a joyful noise, lift up our eyes, clap our hands, raise our hands, bow our heads, or get on our knees. When we're so inclined, passion and freedom should be our pattern as well.

But not at the cost of *order* in worship. Where *all things should be done decently and in order* the Bible says. (1 Cor 14:40) That's why we don't dance in the aisles, or wave a bunch of flags, or tap on tambourines. There's *freedom* in our passion, but not at the cost of order.

Or, at the expense of *others*. Whatever you do in *your* freedom and passion, you should be mindful of others; so you don't inhibit *their* passion and freedom. By distracting them. So that all they see is *you* instead of God.

There's *freedom* in our passionate worship, but not at the cost of order, and not at the expense of others.

Having said that, I think we could do with a little *more* passion and freedom these days. I've been a bit concerned about that recently. Wondering if we've become complacent in our worship. A little flat. Going through the motions. Worrying more about what the person next to us thinks, than what God thinks.

Whatever the case, that's not the pattern of God's people, nor the bedrock of a solid church. Passionate worship is.

4. It's a celebration of God's greatness (Ps 96:1-9)

Passionate worship is the bedrock of solid churches because it's a celebration of God's greatness. Turn back to Psalm 96:1-9.

Oh sing to the LORD a new song [keep your worship fresh]; *sing to the LORD, all the earth!* [2] *Sing to the LORD, bless his name* [as in praise and exalt him]; *tell of his salvation from day to day.* [3] *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!*

[4] *For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.* [5] *For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.* [6] *Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.* The place of his presence.

[7] *Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!* [8] *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!* [9] *Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!*

If that's not a celebration, I don't know what is. *Sing to the Lord; bless his name; declare his glory; ascribe strength; bring an offering.* And *worship*. It's a passionate celebration.

And rightly so in light of such greatness. Rightly so in light of such splendor and power and majesty. You couldn't keep a lid on it if you tried.

Which is why passionate worship is often accompanied by clapping, and loud songs of joy, and raising our hands. Like it says in **Ps 47:1** – *Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!* And **Ps 63:4** – *In your name I will lift up my hands.* All physical expressions of passionate celebration.

That said, does that mean *all* worship has to be loud? Do we need to clap and raise our hands during *every* song? Not at all. The Psalms give credence to times of reflection as well. Even silence.

But having received the greatest gift in the world, and having beheld the greatness of God's power and glory – in the Word, and in our lives, and in our church – passionate celebration should be the norm. Bedrock indeed.

5. It's part of our witness (Acts 3:8-10)

Passionate worship is the bedrock of solid churches because it's part of our witness.

Remember the lame beggar that Peter and John healed? It says in **Acts 3:8** that – *Leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.*

Why the temple? To worship. That's why Peter and John were there in the first place. It was *the hour of prayer* (1); the appointed *time* for corporate worship. So he joined them. He entered the temple *walking and leaping and praising God*. Just like King David a thousand years before.

And then it says in **v9-10** – *And all the people saw him walking and praising God* [there's the witness part; they *saw* him worshipping], *[10] and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*

Amen! That's the point. That's the purpose. Passionate worship not only conveys our heart to God, but God's work to others. God's work in us. Leaving those who see it, those who see our worship, full of wonder and amazement.

The blind beggar's passionate worship was a witness to those around him. One of the ways he conveyed the goodness and greatness of God in his life. One of the ways he conveyed his testimony.

And the same should be true for us. Worship should be an ongoing part of our witness. Even at church. Because unbelievers aren't the *only* ones who need to see the impact of God in your life, believers do too. They too need to see God's glory. They too need to be encouraged. *Filled with wonder and amazement* every single week. Resulting in even more worship. More passion. Bedrock upon bedrock.

And last, passionate worship is the bedrock of solid churches because . . .

6. It's the only fitting response to Jesus (Revelation 5:11-14) (Worship Team on stage)

The *head* of the church. The one who *builds* the church. The one who *loves* the church. The who laid down his *life* for the church.

The one who died and rose again. The one who ascended and reigns on high. The Alpha and Omega. Creator and sustainer. The King of kings and Lord of lords.

No wonder the saints and angels cry, “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain*. It's only fitting. No wonder they lift up their voices *loudly*. No wonder they say – *Worthy is the Lamb . . . to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing*. (Rev 5:11-14) Jesus is worthy! And the only fitting response is passionate worship.

You Are Loved