

Worship 101, part 2
August 6, 2017

I am talking this morning about worship. I am wrapping up the two part series I started last Sunday. There are two common mistakes we make about worship. One is to just go through the motions. You can come and sing the songs, listen to the prayers and sermons and not worship at all. Your spirit needs to be involved. If you missed part 1 of this series you can read it on line, or if you do not have a computer you can request a copy and we will print one for you.

Another mistake some people make when they hear the word worship is to think that worship is only what we do at church on Sunday. But worship is much broader than that. Christians should be worshipping every day. I urge you to set aside time to engage in personal worship each day with prayer and Bible reading. I will speak to this today.

Our key verses today begin with the same one as last week.

Hebrews 12:28 d (NIV) " ... let us... worship God [acceptably](#)... "

There is more to that verse. That is what the pattern of three periods mean. These are called ellipsis. I will fill in the dots in a moment. But first I wanted to strip the verse down and emphasize the basic thrust of it.

There is an acceptable way to worship God.

As a Christian you need to know what God expects. Last week we saw that God expects us to worship in spirit and in truth. As we fill in the rest of the verse this morning we will see some more of what is acceptable to God.

Hebrews 12:28 a & d (NIV) Therefore, [since we are receiving a kingdom...](#), let us... worship God acceptably...

Worship is a response to the blessings being received from God.

Other religions worship to try to get something from God. Christian worship is the opposite. We worship in response to the blessings we have already received from God.

God has already blessed each Christian with numerous spiritual blessings. For example, we have been justified, sanctified, redeemed, forgiven of all our sins, adopted into God's family, and have been baptized into the Holy Spirit. In short, we are now part of Jesus' kingdom. Being part of Jesus' kingdom means Jesus rules in our hearts, we obey Him, we become like Him. This is the kingdom we are receiving as followers of Jesus. Look what our verse says about that kingdom.

Hebrews 12:28 a, b, & d (NIV) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom [that cannot be shaken](#), let us... worship God acceptably...

This kingdom cannot be shaken. That means that nothing will destroy it. The same is not true of the earth. The context of this verse speaks of shaking.

The author of this letter has compared two events. The first event was God's rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They traveled down the Sinai peninsula, east of Egypt, to the base of Mt. Sinai. There, God spoke to the Israelites from atop the mountain and the mountain shook with a violent earthquake.

The second event is a future shaking where God will shake the whole earth and everything of man will come tumbling down. In fact, both earth and heaven will be shaken. But God's kingdom will not fall. Our salvation is secure. He concludes that thought in our key verses.

Hebrews 12:28 a, b, & d (NIV) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom **that cannot be shaken**, let us... worship God acceptably...

Remember that worship is a response to the blessings we have received from God. So how should we respond to receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, cannot be destroyed?

Hebrews 12:28 a-d (NIV) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, **let us be thankful**, and so worship God acceptably...

To worship God acceptably, I must make gratitude the primary action of my worship.

We must learn to worship by giving thanks for our blessings. I encourage you to make this a daily habit. This habit has two parts. The first part is to remember. **Remember the blessings you have.** The second part is to thank. **Thank God for each one.**

Now the focus of our key verses are the spiritual blessings we have in Jesus. But in your personal worship, there are more blessings to give thanks for. We have many blessings, not just spiritual ones. We have material blessings, the love of family members, Christian friends and much more. Some blessings are what we have and some are what we don't have. Let me illustrate both with a true story.

A preacher once preached on being thankful and after he was done a man came up to him and said, "Preacher, I just don't have anything to be thankful for. My life is a mess."

So the preacher and he sat down together, the preacher took out a pen and some paper and wrote at the top of the paper, "Blessings To Be Thankful For". Then he started asking the man some questions. He asked, "Have you got a broken leg?"

The man looked startled and said, "No, I don't have a broken leg." You can see I don't have a broken leg. The preacher wrote down, "No broken leg". Next he asked him if he had a broken arm. Again the puzzled answer was, "No." The preacher wrote down, no broken arms. Then he asked the man if he had heart trouble. The man said, "No, I don't have heart trouble. My heart is fine." The preacher wrote that down. He asked the man if he was unemployed. The man said, "No, I have a job, a GOOD job." The preacher wrote that down.

After a few more minutes of this the light of understanding came on for this man. He understood that he had much to be thankful for. There are millions of things that people suffer with that he was not going through. In addition, he had been blessed with lots of good things that he was ignoring. He just couldn't see the multitude of his blessings because he

was so focused on his problems. He had a lot more blessings than problems. He was focused on the wrong things.

Are you? You might be miserable this morning because you are focused on your problems instead of your blessings. I am sometimes guilty of this. I find myself starting my prayer time focused on my work, and shortchanging my thanks. I'll pray something like, "God I've got so much to do today, I'm not sure where to start. Give me focus, give me energy, give me patience, give me strength."

In-other-words, I start by focusing on my problems instead of my blessings. I start defeated instead of victorious. I start depressed instead of rejoicing. I start feeling sorry for myself instead of remembering how blessed I am. And when I am done I feel no better than when I started. My joyous times of worship are those in which I begin by focusing on God and how great He is and all He has done for me.

I encourage you to do the same. I encourage you to make a habit of remembering and giving thanks for your blessings. Let's go one filling in our key verses. There is an important warning for us.

Hebrews 12:28 (NIV) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably [with reverence and awe](#),...

The point of this added phrase is... **Accept God's invitation to trust and obey.** At first glance that may not seem to fit the phrase "with reverence and awe". But let me explain why I have stated it this way.

There is always the danger that we read a verse without seeing the context in which it lies. Our key verses are concluding a warning that has run all through this letter.

The Christians to which this letter was written were being threatened with persecution. They were being tempted to slack off in their devotion to Jesus, even to leave Him altogether. The author compares this to the Israelites in the Sinai who refused to put their faith in God and obey Him. And because of this they suffered the consequences of that lack of faith and disobedience.

The adults of that earlier generation all died in the wilderness and never stepped foot in the promised land. God judged them guilty and punished them. And the author of Hebrews is warning these Christians that God will do the same to them if they fail to put their faith in Him and obey the gospel. Let us now see how He does this.

There are two special Greek words here. The first word, translated as "reverence", has the primary meaning of caution. I believe it should be so translated here. Certainly the idea of reverence, to revere and respect God, is included. But I believe the writer used this word in particular because he wanted to communicate that we should consider carefully the consequences of NOT holding firm to Jesus.

The second word is translated as "awe". That English word carries the idea of amazement. That is how we normally use this word. People were in awe of the miracles Jesus did. Most did not fear him. It was a celebrative awe. They glorified God because of the miracles.

But the word translated as “awe” in this verse carries the idea of fear. We should approach God in worship with a sense that we are approaching the most powerful being in the universe. As such we must not treat Him with any disrespect. We see this as we conclude our key verses.

Hebrews 12:28-29 (NIV) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, [for our God is a consuming fire.](#)

If the author wanted us to worship with joy, he would have written something else here, something about the grace of God or the love of God. Instead, he warns that God is a consuming fire. This means judgment. He is writing a warning to us. We must worship God acceptably, with caution and fear, because God is a consuming fire. **Such warnings of judgment appear all through the letter.** I wanted to read all of them, but to save time, we'll focus on those in chapter 10.

(Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12; 4:1, 11; 6:4-6)

Hebrews 10:26-27, 31 (NIV) If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God...

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Now we come to chapter 12 of Hebrews. He begins by reminding the readers of God's rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They had come to camp at the foot of Mount Sinai. They were terrified by the power of God's presence and begged that God not appear like that again, but rather speak through His servant Moses.

Hebrews 12:18-21 (NIV) You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

God showed them just a hint of the power He had, and they were terrified. Then the author of Hebrews writes of us Christians coming before God in His heavenly throne room. We see others there in addition to God.

Hebrews 12:22-24 (NIV) (You have not come to Mt. Sinai, on earth) But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Now comes the warning.

Hebrews 12:25-27 (NIV) See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn

away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--that is, created things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

God is still a "consuming fire." A large proportion of nominal Christians do not believe in this God. They profess reverence to a merciful God, but the moment you preach His justice or judgment upon sin, they refuse to listen.

Do not think you can pick and choose what parts of the Bible to believe. The same Bible that reveals God's mercy and grace warns us of God's wrath. So do not turn away from God's invitation to be saved. God will judge the world of sin. God will punish sin. Either accept Jesus' suffering for your sin, or you will suffer for your sin. There is no option where God does not punish sin.

Acceptable worship is based on the death of Jesus for us. Worship that God accepts begins with the gospel, with our trust in it and obedience to Him.

Maybe you come here week to week and you enjoy the music, the good choir, the prayers and the preaching. You are making friends and enjoying being with them. You are trusting that Jesus died for your sins, but you have not repented, been baptized, and begun living your worship of Him.

Do you think YOU will escape the consuming fire of God's judgment? Not a chance. And the more you resist God the harder it will be to change your mind.

Today, repent of your hard heart and turn to God in faith, repentance, and obedience.

Everyone, close your eyes. Now make a fist with your hand and place it in your lap, fingers up. This morning God is calling you to let go. It may be a sin you are holding onto. God has been calling you to repent of this and you have been resisting Him. Give up this sin. Confess it and let it go to God today.

Or it may be that God has been calling you to give up something else, not a sin, but a bad habit. And you have been resisting this. Give it up to Him today.

God may have been after you for some time to start doing something and you have been resisting this. Surrender today to God's will.

If you are ready to give yourself fully into God's will this morning, tell Him so and open your hand to Him.