

Matt Mason

WORSHIP IN THE VALLEY

I. Worship and Adversity in the Psalms

A. Worship as Trust

Ps. 28:7 “The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.”

1. The Psalms give us both inspired *songs* that demonstrate what kind of praise pleases God as well as uphold heart-orientations: trust in God, value for His Word, truth in the inward parts, etc.
2. As many of the Psalms seem to be written in the ‘minor key’ (David Powlison), trust in adversity emerges one of the primary expressions of a life of worship in the Psalms.
3. Even in the Psalmists’ anguish there is an implicit faith in that, if nothing else, he continues to cry out to God. He keeps praying to God, rehearsing truths of God’s mercy and saving action.

“Men love to trust God (as they profess) for what they have in their hands, in possession, or what lies in an easy view; place their desires afar off, carry their accomplishment behind the clouds out of their sight, interpose difficulties and perplexities -- their hearts are instantly sick. They cannot wait for God; they do not trust Him, nor ever did. Would you have the presence of God with you? Learn to wait quietly for the salvation you expect from Him.” (John Owen, “God’s Presence with a People the Spring of Their Prosperity”, *Sermons of John Owen*)

B. *Knowing* and Trusting God

Ps. 9:10 “And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.”

Ps. 46:1-2a “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way.”

1. As in other parts of Scripture, God anchors the trust of His people by revealing His glorious attributes. As their portrait of God gets larger so does their trust in Him.
2. Psalm 103 illustrates how God’s attributes and actions on behalf of His people awaken responses of trust and adoration.

3. Trust in God is rooted in the knowledge of God.

Prov. 25:19 “Trusting in a treacherous (unfaithful) man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.”

“Having said that trusting God is first of all a matter of the will, let me qualify that statement to say that, first of all, it is a matter of knowledge.” (Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*, pg. 195)

II. Join All the Glorious Names: Self-Revealing God & Suffering Saints

Is. 40:10-14 Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

A. God is Loving and Good

Ps. 69:16 “Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.”

Ps. 4:7-8 “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”

B. God is Wise

Ps. 139:1-2,4,6 “O Lord you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar... Even before a word is on my tongue, behold O Lord you know it altogether.... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.”

1. God’s eyes see all places. He has perfect knowledge not only of the past and present but also exhaustive knowledge of the future.

Ps. 139:17 “How precious to me are your thoughts O God! How vast is the sum of them!”

2. In midst of adversity, David trusts and worships and sleeps at night (Ps. 3:5; 4:8) because God’s eye is on him.

C. God is Sovereign

Ps. 135:5-6 “For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.”

Dan. 4:35 “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’”

1. What consolation there is in the sovereignty and providence of God!

“Did we in our own strength confide
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right Man on our side,
The man of God’s own choosing.
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him.
His rage we can endure for lo his doom is sure
One little word shall fell him.”
(Martin Luther, hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”)

2. We can worship in the valley because we have a God who is loving and wise and sovereign - who ordains all things for the good of those who love Him (Rom 8:28)!

III. Worship, the Valley, & Sunday Morning

A. Cultivating Affections for God

Ps. 63:1,3 “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you ... Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.”

1. The glory of the gospel is greater than my greatest trial.
2. We gather not to sharpen our ability to debate theology, but to have our affections for God stirred up, or amazement at the gospel heightened, our faith in God’s promises increased.

Qualifier: We don’t want to make our feelings/emotions the index of a fruitful morning of ministry ...

3. But I don’t ever want to become familiar or bored with the gospel, **BECAUSE THE GOSPEL IS ANYTHING BUT BORING!**

B. Expectations and Motives in Serving (1 Cor. 10:31b, 14:26c)

1. In cases of catastrophic suffering, it may be necessary to take a sabbatical.
2. In the face of smaller sufferings ('little foxes'), it's important that, as we prepare, we contend against self-absorption.
3. As a worship team member it is possible that we are not engaging with God on Sunday morning because we're not focused on a) the glory of God in Christ and b) edifying others.

C. Songs That Feed Faith

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

1. Songs that aim at God, not at 'worship'
2. A 'worship' song can move me emotionally without ever directing me to God.
3. In the aftermath of the storm, we needed hearts postured rightly before God, which first meant we needed to behold God by faith.
4. Faith comes by hearing the 'word of Christ' (gospel)

I need to see One who is bigger than my greatest sins and my greatest trials!

"There is no man whatever that hath any want in reference to the things of God, but Christ will be unto him that which he wants ... Is he *dead*? Christ is life. Is he weak? Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Hath he the sense of guilt upon him? Christ is complete righteousness Many poor creatures are sensible of their wants, but know not where their remedy lies. Indeed, whether it be life or light, power or joy, all is wrapped up in him." (John Owen, quoted in J.I. Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, pg 205)

IV. Question and Answer

Resources:

Trusting God, Jerry Bridges

The Hidden Smile of God, John Piper

Suffering and the Sovereignty of God, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor

How Long, O Lord, D.A. Carson

Knowing God, J.I. Packer

When I Don't Desire God, John Piper