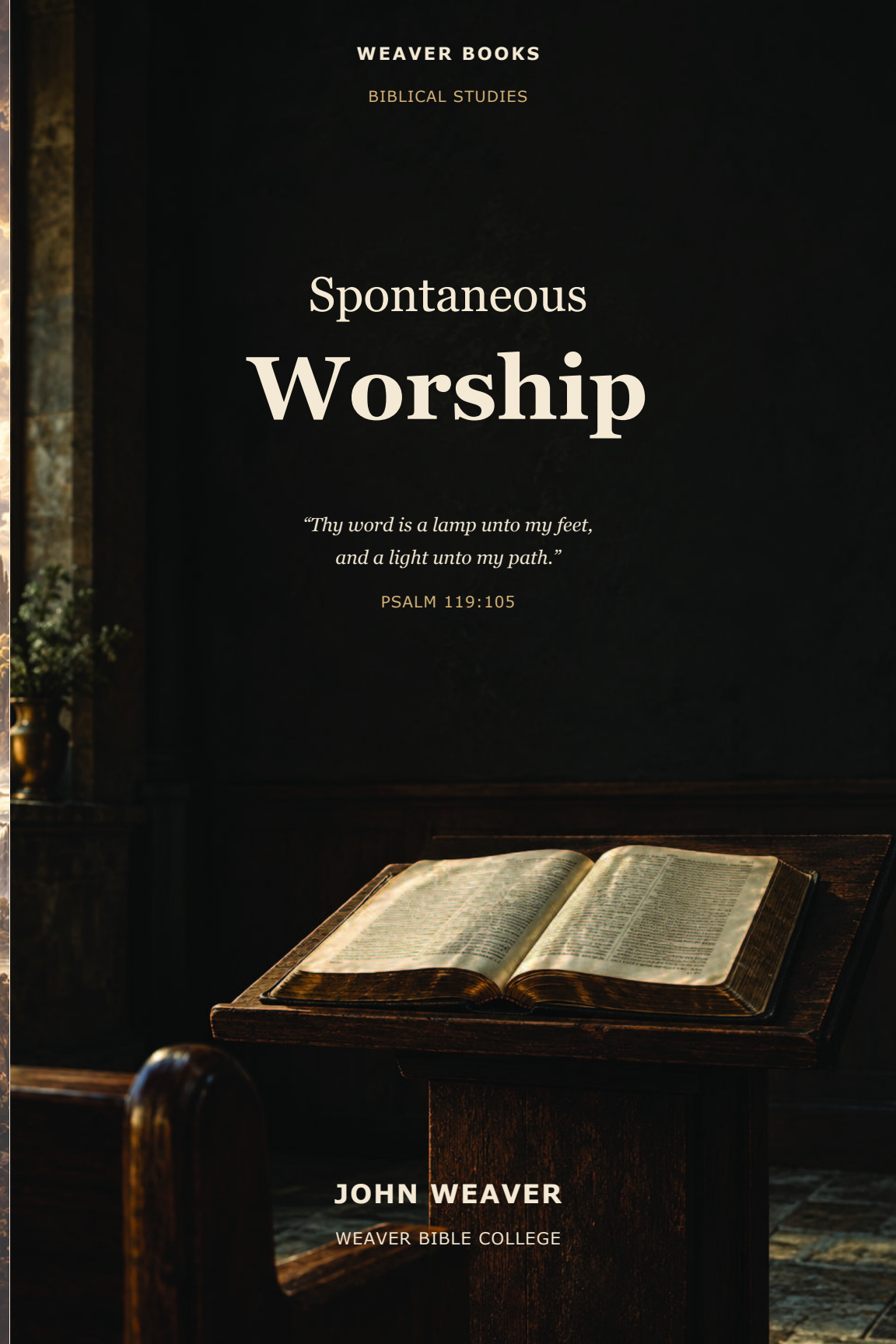
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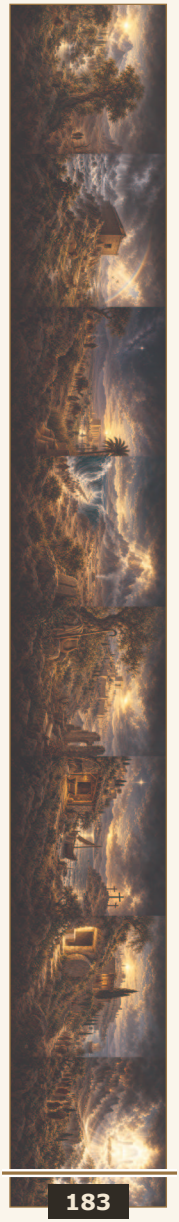
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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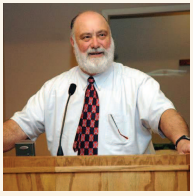
Worship him in spirit and in truth.

JOHN 4:24, EXCERPT

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"You cannot give grudgingly when you are thankful for everything that God has given to you."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

Spontaneous Worship

Part One of Two

Introduction to Spontaneous Worship

Genesis 24:26 says, “And the man bowed his head and worshiped the Lord.” Worship is frequently spoken of, especially among professing Christians. Yet many who profess to worship the One True and Living God do not really worship Him, and many who do, worship Him unacceptably. The only way to worship Him in truth is through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture teaches that unless we worship Him through Christ, we end up worshiping devils.

The Necessity of Worship in Spirit and Truth

First Corinthians 10:20-21 says, “But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, that is the unsaved, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. And I would not that you should have fellowship with devils. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the devils. You cannot be partaker of the Lord's table and of the table of devils.” Unless we worship the One True and Living God in the way He has revealed, we end up worshiping devils.

Unacceptable worship fails to worship God in spirit and truth. No one may worship Him any way he pleases. We must worship according to His stated order. In the Old Testament, no one could run into the tabernacle or temple and do whatever he wanted. There was an order.

John 4 gives God's boundaries for worship: spirit and truth. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Verse 24 says, "God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." True, acceptable worship is bounded by truth on one hand and spirit on the other.

In one sense, everyone worships, though they do not worship the One True and Living God or worship acceptably. They worship devils, self, power, money, or something else. They do not worship God as He is revealed in Scripture. As Christians, we speak of public and private worship.

Public, Private, and Spontaneous Worship

The Lord demands both public and private worship. We worship publicly and congregationally on Sunday, the day of our Lord's resurrection. Easter is not the only celebration of His resurrection. The Bible tells us Christ rose on the first day of the week. Every Sunday is a fresh celebration of His resurrection.

We also worship privately in our homes, at our places of business, and as we travel. Many people confuse the means of worship with worship itself. Prayer, studying the Word, preaching it, and expounding it are integral parts of worship, but worship is more than these means. Worship engages the entirety of our beings in giving our Lord praise, honor, and adoration, submitting to Him and recognizing Him.

Psalm 103:1 shows this engagement of our whole being, especially our spirit and truth, the boundaries God has laid down. David says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, not just part of me, not a little bit of me, but bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." The whole being is involved, what I would call man's spirit.

Verse 2 says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” Now the mind is engaged. David lists benefits: “who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.”

David worships with both his spirit and his mind. He is not sitting idly, dreaming about next week’s work or last week’s events. His mind is engaged with God’s goodness, mercy, and grace. When we say we have come to worship, we should think and meditate on the truth being taught and expounded.

Jeremiah 33:11 says, “The voice of joy, the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, the voice of the bride, and of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for His mercy endureth forever, and of them shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord.” These people praise the Lord and bring the sacrifice of praise into His house.

Hebrews 13:15 says, “By Him, that is by the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.” Through Jesus Christ, we offer continual praise to God the Father. The passage tells us specifically what that sacrifice is: the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

Public worship, and usually private worship, have stated seasons. That is good, because God is a God of order. We could not worship congregationally without agreeing to meet at a certain time and place. If everyone came and went as he pleased, there would be individual worship, but no congregational worship. We can also have stated seasons at home. First Corinthians 14:40 tells us to let everything be done decently and in order, because God is a God of order.

Hebrews 10:25 commands, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but so much the more exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching.” We must assemble to praise Him and exhort one another.

Another aspect of worship has been greatly neglected by preachers and Christians generally: spontaneous worship, or simply bowing and worshiping. This is worship given apart from the stated seasons of public and private worship, in recognition of God's goodness, mercy, and grace. In one sense, it can be part of private worship because you do it privately. Yet it has no necessarily stated times. It is spontaneous worship, bowing and worshiping.

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 17:11-17 (KJV)

The Classic Illustration: The Grateful Leper

Luke 17:11-17 gives a classic illustration:

"And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off."

"And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go, show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that as they went they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks." "And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?"

Usually, preaching on this passage focuses on the nine who were ungrateful, unthankful, and unappreciative, probably rightly so. Most people take God's blessings and benefits without thinking of Him, assuming He owes them all these things. Seldom do we focus on the one who turned back and gave spontaneous worship.

He fell on his face, praised the Lord, and thanked Him. Leprosy cut men off from family, society, and worship. They covered their mouths and lips, and if anyone approached, they cried, "Unclean, unclean," and stayed away. The four lepers in Samaria lived on garbage thrown over the wall. They could not enter the city. Leprosy amounted to a slow, agonizing death.

When this man was miraculously and marvelously cleansed and healed, he returned, fell on his face, worshiped, and gave thanks and praise.

People have asked me, “Do you believe in healing?” I answer, “Yes, because everybody has been sick and has gotten well.” They ask, “But I mean, do you believe in divine healing?” I answer, “Yes, because all healing is divine.”

God can sovereignly, powerfully, and miraculously heal someone, as He healed this leper. But when we become sick and take herbs, vitamins, home remedies, alternative medicine, or prescription medicine, we recover only because God blesses the means. If He did not bless them, we would not be healed.

Jesus Christ is the Great Physician, the Great Healer. How often have we recovered without thanking God? We have been healed of flu, viruses, colds, sinus infections, and other maladies, yet seldom bow our heads and worship. How dare we take God’s blessings without thanking Him or acknowledging they all come from Him?

One of God’s scriptural names is Jehovah-Rapha, literally the Lord who heals you, found in Exodus 15:26. All healing comes from the Lord.

Bowing in worship is exactly what the Samaritan did in Luke 17. The first occurrence in the Bible is Genesis 24:26.

First Occurrence: Eliezer's Worship (Genesis 24)

Genesis 24:26 says, “And the man bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord.” Spontaneous worship is revealed many times in Scripture. Here Abraham sends his servant Eliezer to obtain a wife for Isaac. Eliezer identifies himself only as “I am Abraham's servant”; he never gives his name. How do we know his name? In Genesis 15:2, Abram said, “Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus.” The steward controlled everything, and his name was Eliezer.

Abraham charged him under oath never to take Isaac back to the land from which Abraham had come. Isaac must remain in the land. Genesis 24:4-8 says:

"But thou shalt go into my country, into my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land, must I needs bring thy son again into the land from which thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware that thou bring not my son thither again. The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land. He shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again."

As steward, Eliezer had control of everything. He took ten camels, loaded them with goods, and traveled to Mesopotamia. Verse 10 says:

"And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master and departed, for all the goods of his master were in his hands. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia into the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water."

When I read this passage, it dawned on me that it was scriptural for Alice to water the cattle. I told her so: this was the time women went out to draw water. When it is raining and cold, it will be her time.

In verse 12, Eliezer prays:

"O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. And let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink, and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also. Let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac, and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master."

Eliezer asked that among the women coming, the one God had ordained would give him water and also water his camels. He sought

more than a beautiful woman. He sought a compassionate, willing, gracious, and hardworking woman.

I do not know how many gallons a camel, or ten camels, can drink, but drawing their water could be quite an exercise. You would lower a bucket into the well, pull it up, and repeat until the camels were full. The woman ordained by God would give him water and water the camels.

Verse 15 continues:

"And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her. And she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord. And she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again into the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not."

"And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of a half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold, and said, Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee. Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor. She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. And the man bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth, I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren."

This is a remarkable instance of divine providence. Abraham was in Canaan. His servant took ten camels, evidently accompanied by

others, and traveled all the way to Mesopotamia to obtain a wife for Isaac. There was no GPS, no road maps, and no inns, especially Holiday Inns. Without an address or a city, he went into this country, and God led him directly to Abraham's brother's house.

When the man saw it, he bowed his head and worshiped. God had protected and preserved him. Surely robbers and thieves along the way were looking for caravans, yet he arrived and worshiped. In verse 48, testifying to Bethuel, Laban, and the family, he says, "And I bowed down my head and worshipped the Lord and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son." He bowed and worshiped.

How often has God providentially protected and preserved us, answering our prayers in a timely, loving, gracious way, while we failed to bow, worship, and acknowledge Him? I could give many illustrations from my life. Consider the recent tornadoes. We canceled the meeting because of them. At precisely the time I would have been traveling back through Adel, Georgia, after that meeting, a tornado went through Adel.

It wiped out a trailer park in fifteen seconds, destroyed innumerable homes, and killed a number of people. Tornadoes also hit Albany, Georgia. One went over one daughter's house; she suffered only a tree down in the road. At the other daughter's house, almost every tree in her yard was gone. A neighbor's tree fell on the corner of their house and took out the roof. Another tree fell on the neighbor's house. Had they been in bed, they would have died, because the tree went through the bedroom and pushed the rafters onto the bed.

This happened Sunday afternoon. Monday morning, Alice and I took my chainsaws and went over. I was astounded. It looked like an atomic bomb had gone off. For miles on Hill Street, practically every tree was overturned or snapped, and telephone poles, light poles, and all the lines were down.

They had already been without electricity a week and expected nine more days without it. The pine trees in my daughter's yard were

huge, besides the oaks. You could not simply cut one up for firewood; you needed a tractor to pull away the section you had cut.

Looking at it all, I thanked the Lord for preserving Alice and me and our house. We had much rain, but that was all. Even if He had spared my house but brought down the surrounding trees, I would not have had the energy or ability to cut everything up. I would have needed immense help.

How often has God sovereignly protected us while we said, "Wow, that was my lucky day," instead of giving Him honor and glory? When this man recognized God's providence, he bowed and worshiped.

The Symbolism of Bowing and the Danger of a Stiff Neck

Why do we bow our heads in prayer and worship? We may lower our heads or bend over almost to the ground, as Orientals sometimes do. The biblical answer is that bowing symbolizes humility, submission, and servitude. Refusing to bow indicates rebellion, wickedness, pride, arrogance, and haughtiness.

Moses told Israel in Deuteronomy 31:27, "For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck. Behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, you have been rebellious against the Lord. How much more after my death?" He knew their rebellion and stiff neck. Psalm 75:5 says, "Lift not up your horn on high, speak not with a stiff neck." Do not become arrogant, proud, haughty, hardheaded, or stubborn.

Jeremiah 17:23 explains the symbol: "But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction." A stiff-necked individual will not listen or submit. He is hardheaded and does what is wicked and wrong.

Deuteronomy 10:16 says, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no more stiffnecked." Second Chronicles 30:8 says, "Now be ye not stiffnecked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into the sanctuary which he has sanctified forever, and serve the Lord your God." Bowing indicates

submission and yielding, while a stiff neck indicates rebellion and hardheadedness.

Before Stephen was stoned, he gave a history lesson to those about to kill him. Acts 7:51 says, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” He called them stiff-necked in heart and ears.

William Ernest Henley was an English poet who died of tuberculosis. He contracted it as a young man and struggled with it most of his life. In the hospital, suffering from tuberculosis, he wrote “Invictus.” He died in 1903. His poem is the epitome of arrogance, pride, rebellion, and a stiff neck:

"Out of the night that covers me, black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance, my head is bloody but unbowed."

"Beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade, and yet the menace of the years finds and shall find me unafraid."

“It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul.”

Here is a prime example of someone refusing to bow in worship. This poem exhibits what the Word of God condemns. It is the cry of the infidel, atheist, and rebel.

Early in the twentieth century, Dorothea Day responded with “Conquered”:

"Out of the light that dazzles me, bright as the sun from pole to pole, I thank the God that I know to be, for Jesus Christ, the conqueror of my soul. Since His the sway of circumstance, I would not wince nor cry aloud."

"Under the rule which men call chance, my head with joy is humbly bowed. Beyond this place of sin and tears, that life with Him and His the aid, that spite the menace of the years keeps, and will keep me unafraid. I have no fear how strait the gate. He cleared from

punishment the scroll. Christ is the master of my fate. Christ is the captain of my soul."

With Dorothea Day, I would rather bow and worship. I prefer being conquered by Jesus Christ to sailing my ship as captain of my own fate. Without Christ, I know what my fate would be. There are plenty of reasons to bow and worship. Bowing the head speaks of submission, yielding, servitude, and humility.

The second occurrence of bowing in worship is Exodus 4:29-31. Israel hears that God will deliver them:

"And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spake all these words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed. And when they had heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped."

Second Occurrence: Israel's Worship at News of Deliverance (Exodus 4)

Deliverance is a wonderful word; news of deliverance is even better. When Israel merely heard God had sent Moses and Aaron and looked upon their affliction, they bowed and worshiped, acknowledging His goodness, kindness, and faithfulness.

How often has God delivered you physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, and above all, spiritually? Have you bowed your head and worshiped? Every deliverance calls for praise and worship, even the news of it. People have come to me saying, “I have good news for you.” I would much rather hear good news than bad. When Israel heard the news that God would deliver them, they bowed and worshiped.

Do not stand there saying it is your lucky day. It is God’s sovereign providence. When good news comes, bow and worship. How often have we failed to give Him the glory due His name? Psalm 29:2 says, “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” The second time people bowed in worship was when they heard He would visit them.

The third instance concerns the Passover. Exodus 12:23-27 says:

"For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians, and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses to smite you."

Third Occurrence: Worship at the Passover (Exodus 12)

"And you shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass when you become to the land which the Lord will give you, according as He hath promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? That you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped."

News of deliverance is one thing; the promise is better; actual deliverance is better still. When you are delivered and your enemies are destroyed or made helpless, it is time to bow and worship. When God passed over Israel and spared them, they bowed and worshiped.

The Passover is a type; Jesus Christ is its antitype or fulfillment. The Passover delivered Israel from Egypt. First Corinthians 5:7 says, “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” He delivers us from the flesh, the world, sin, and the Devil. When you think of Passover, you think of redemption. God redeemed His people from Egypt, and we now have redemption in Jesus Christ.

Redemption crosses my mind fairly regularly. First Corinthians 1:30 says, “But of him, that is God the Father, but of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” Christ is our redemption. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

The very thought of redemption should make us bow and worship. You say you love the Heavenly Father. Why do you love Him? Because He first loved you. Herein is love: not that we loved

Him, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the propitiation for our sins. How often do you thank the Father for sending Christ to be our redemption, salvation, and propitiation?

Speaking of Christ, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:15, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” Words cannot express His value. At actual redemption, Israel bowed and worshiped. As we go along and think of what God has done for us in Christ, we need spontaneously to bow our heads, worship, and thank Him for that redemption.

Fourth Occurrence: Moses' Worship at God's Revelation (Exodus 34)

The fourth passage is Exodus 34:4-8. Moses had broken the first two tablets. God commanded him to hew two more and return to the mount. Verse 4 begins:

“And he hewed two tablets of stone like unto the first. And Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up into Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him. And he took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.”

"And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the children's children unto the third and to the fourth generation."

Moses had asked to see God’s glory. God put him in the cleft of the rock, told him he could not see His face, and covered him while He passed by so Moses could see His rear part. What Moses saw was His glory, mercy, and grace.

Have you seen, comprehended, or understood any degree of God’s attributes and character? What of His sovereignty? He is absolutely and totally sovereign, controlling everything. If He shows you His Godhood, deity, or sovereignty and you perceive it, you should bow and worship. You cannot grasp Him fully, for only God understands

God, but you can see a part. Moses did so. Verse 8 says, “And Moses made haste and bowed his head to the earth and worshipped.”

What if God shows you His omniscience, His knowledge of everything? Known unto God are all His works from the beginning; He knows the end from the beginning. What if you understand His omnipresence to some degree, His being everywhere at once in the totality of His being?

Think of His omnipotence, His all-powerfulness; His immutability, His unchangeableness; His infinity, veracity, truth, love, grace, and mercy. When you see these, even slightly, bow your head in worship. Think of people our age and younger who have already died, or who have physical, mental, and emotional difficulties.

I saw a woman at dinner who could not straighten her head. She clearly had a real physical problem. In my mind, I asked the Lord to help her and thanked Him for protecting me. That is understanding, in some sense, His love for us. Undoubtedly He loved her too, for she was still alive. Yet we have seen and know things others do not see or know.

In Matthew 13:16-17, our Lord told His disciples, “But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear. For verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see and have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear and have not heard them.”

When God shows you any truth in His Word, especially concerning His character and attributes, it is time to bow and worship. Multitudes have never seen or heard what you have been blessed to see and hear.

Luke 10:21 says, “In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” As a believer understanding truth from God’s Word, you know more than many philosophers and men with earned PhDs. He has enlightened you, illuminated your mind, and opened your eyes to see and understand.

Whenever He shows us any scriptural truth, we should bow and worship. The truth being shown here is bowing in worship. Learn to do it regularly, many times daily. Drop your head and say, “Thank you, Lord. Praise you, Lord. I give you grace, and I give you praise, and I give thee honor and glory because you're God.”

Applications: Cultivating Spontaneous Worship and Humility

Spontaneous worship is often the purest and best worship because it leaps from our hearts and mouths in grateful adulation and adoration. Overwhelmed by a thought of God’s mercy, love, or grace, we find ourselves without hesitation giving Christ praise and honor mentally, emotionally, and even vocally. There is nothing wrong with that. Sometimes I think of something and simply say, “Praise the Lord.” Alice hears and asks, “What did you say?” I answer, “I was just praising the Lord, that's okay.” That is what we need to do.

Whatever our circumstance or situation, make sure we do not have a spiritually stiff neck in our attitudes, actions, words, or mental and emotional state. To avoid lifting our horn on high and speaking with a stiff neck, we must remember who God is and who we are.

He is the Lord; we are His subjects. He is the master; we are servants. He is the head; we are the body. He is the creator; we are creatures. He is the shepherd; we are sheep. He is God; we are the dust of the earth.

Luke 14:11 says, “For whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, but whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted.” If we do not want God to put us down, we must not exalt ourselves with a stiff neck. He can humble those who exalt themselves. Ask Nebuchadnezzar. God drove him insane for seven years and made him eat grass like an ox for seven years. The way up is down. If we do not wish to be put down, we must not lift ourselves up. If we wish God to lift us up, remember our Lord’s words: “Behold, I'm among you as he that serveth.” We must take the position of humility and servitude, especially by bowing and worshiping.

Father, help us today, Lord, teach us and speak to our hearts. And help us, Father, to bow and worship before Thee. You've been so good, so gracious, so kind, so beneficent. Thank You, Father, for Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You for His so great salvation. Thank You, Father, for the Holy Spirit in His ministry. Thank You for the Word of God. Thank You for the ministry and the saints of God. And help us, Father, to love Thee and to live for Thee, and to bow in worship. In Thy name we ask and pray, amen.

CHAPTER 2

Spontaneous Worship

Part Two of Two

Review of Part 1 and Introduction

Last week I started a message which I entitled, “Bowing and Worshipping,” or “Spontaneous Worship.” In 1 Chronicles chapter 29 and verse 20, the Bible says, “And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the King.”

There is a distinction between public worship and private worship. There is also such a thing as spontaneous worship, which could be classified in one sense as private, but it is not scheduled and therefore is spontaneous.

The very first occurrence was under Eliezer, Abraham’s servant, when he went to get a wife for Isaac. He prayed, and God providentially and sovereignly answered that prayer even before the words got out of his mouth. When he found out that God had

answered the prayer, the Bible said he bowed and worshipped the Lord.

We also looked at the children of Israel. When they received word that God was going to visit them and deliver them, they bowed and worshipped. Likewise, when the actual deliverance came in Exodus chapter 12 at the Passover, and they realized that they were spared, the Bible says they bowed and worshipped.

Then we looked at Moses when God showed him His glory and told him that He would show him His mercy, His goodness, and His longsuffering. As God did so, the Bible tells us that Moses bowed and worshipped.

One of the clearest illustrations of spontaneous worship is found in Luke chapter 17, verses 11–17, in the one Samaritan leper. Our Lord had ten lepers come to Him, and they all asked to be cleansed. As they went away to show themselves to the priest, one—one alone—when he realized that he was cleansed, turned and came back to the Lord, bowed before Him, worshipped Him, and thanked Him. We oftentimes emphasize the nine ungrateful ones, but we never really point out the one who spontaneously worshipped the Lord.

By way of application, how many times has God healed each of us over and over, yet we simply assume that healing is part of living and fail to give God the praise, honor, and glory? Do you understand why we bow our heads when we pray? Oftentimes, even when we worship, we do not bow all the way down to the ground, but there is a reason for it, and that reason is good.

The Stiff Neck as Rebellion

The bowing of the head symbolizes humility, submission, and servitude. Refusing to bow indicates rebellion, wickedness, pride, arrogance, haughtiness, and perversity. Moses said to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 31:27, "For I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck. Behold, while I was alive you have been rebellious against the Lord. How much more after my death?" Notice that the stiff neck and rebellion are equated there. In Psalm 75:5, David says, "Lift not up your horn on high, speak not with a stiff neck."

A stiff neck refuses to hear and heed. This is made exceedingly clear in Jeremiah 17:23, where God says, "But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction." Anyone with a stiff neck simply will not listen, hear, or heed. God characterized the Israelites as a stiff-necked people and told them in Deuteronomy 10:16, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked."

Oftentimes we are stiff-necked and do not even understand what we are doing. We speak in pride and boastfully about what we are going to do, when in reality our attitude is one of rebellion. We do not think about it that way, but James 4 gives a clear illustration, beginning in verses 13–16: "Go to now you that say today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a city and continue a year and get gain, whereas you know not what your life is or what it shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is a vapor that appeareth for a little while and then passeth away. For you ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall do this or that."

Then he adds, "But now you are rejoicing in your boastings? All such rejoicing is evil." When God tells us to say, "If the Lord will, we shall do this or that," we need to take that into account, because our lives are nothing but a vapor.

They are here today and gone tomorrow. We rejoice in our boastings when we begin to say, “We will do this and we will do that.” We really do not know what we are going to do because we may not be alive. So we should be saying, “Lord willing.” Usually, when I accept invitations to preach somewhere, I will add, “Yes, I will be delighted to come, Lord willing, if He allows me to live and have my health and have my being,” because obviously, if He does not, there is no way in the world I am going to be there anyhow.

Fifth Instance: Bowing When Giving Sacrificially (1 Chronicles 29)

We need to learn to bow and worship when we see the grace and goodness of God in our lives. The fifth instance of bowing and worshiping is found in 1 Chronicles 29:20: “And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the Lord your God. And all the

congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the King."

It may startle you to discover the reason for bowing and worshiping in this chapter. In this particular chapter, the people are enabled by God to sacrifice and give toward the work of building the Temple, that is, toward the ministry of the Lord. They are bowing and worshiping because God has allowed them to give sacrificially and to do so in a gracious way.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Chronicles 29:1-9 (KJV)

Furthermore David the king said unto the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great. For the palace, or the temple, is not for man, but for the Lord. Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for the things to be made of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and the brass for the things of brass, the iron for the things of iron, wood for the things of wood, onyx stones and stones to be set, glistering stones of diverse colors in all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of my own proper good that is over and above all this other that he set aside, of gold and silver which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house. Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the house with them. The gold for the things of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? Then the chief of the fathers, and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, were the rulers of the king's work offered willingly, and gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents, and ten thousand drams of gold, of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered

willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Chronicles 29:9-20 (KJV)

And David the king also rejoiced with great joy. "Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty. For all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and glory come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all. And in Thine hand is power and might, and in Thy hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name. But who am I?

And what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all these things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days of the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee in house, for thine holy name cometh of thine own hand, and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart, I have willingly offered all these things, And now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee. And give unto Solomon, my son, a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace for which I have made provision."

"And David said to all the congregation, now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers and bowed down their head and worshipped the Lord and the King."

Let me point out a couple of things before making applications to this. In verse 2, David says, “Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God.” We are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might. Usually, when we think of might, we think of strength, but in this instance our might is our money. David said, “I have prepared with all my might,” and then, “the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver.”

In verse 3, because he had set his affection on the house of God, above all that he had been setting aside for years, he took out of his own personal treasury all the gold and silver and whatever else. Then, throughout the rest of this chapter, you find that the people offered willingly, sacrificed, and gave whatever came into their heart to give. When they ended, they all bowed their heads and worshipped.

Why should we rejoice and worship when God gives us the opportunity to give and sacrifice? David answers that for us in verse 11: “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty. For all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine.”

In verse 14 he says, “But who am I and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee.” Then, in verse 16: “O Lord our God all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine own hand and is all thine.”

When we give and sacrifice unto the Lord, we are recognizing that everything we have came from Him initially and originally. We cannot give Him anything that He has not already given us. If God does not give to us, then we cannot give to Him.

In giving, we recognize His bounty, His goodness, His grace, and His mercy. One reason we should bow and worship when we give is because we are saying, "Lord, you gave to me, and without you giving to me I would have nothing to give back to you." The second reason is found in 2 Corinthians 9 and verse 7. The Apostle Paul said,

"According as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, nor necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver."

When he says, "God loveth a cheerful giver," do you realize it is absolutely impossible to be selfish and haughty when we are bowing and worshipping? You cannot give grudgingly when you are thankful for everything that God has given to you. It is just that simple. Obviously, the Apostle Paul tells us that God loves a cheerful giver. I have hit on this before, and Gary can corroborate this, but the Greek word there is hilarion. Actually, it says God loveth a hilarious giver. So you have heard the old adage, "Give until it hurts." That is not true. You are to give until you are rolling in the aisle laughing, is what it amounts to. God loves a cheerful giver, not a grudging giver.

Second Corinthians 8 and 9 are the two chapters that actually deal with Christian giving and Christian sacrifice. In light of this, we should see verse 8 with verse 7. Paul says, "But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposes in his heart so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth the cheerful giver."

Recognize what Paul says in verse 8. In Acts 20:35, he said, “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Then, in 2 Corinthians 9:8, he says, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” Paul said we need to remember the words of our Lord: it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Someone may say, “I do not know whether that is true.” You do not think it is true? I am sure God can work it out so that you will never be able to give, and all you can do is depend upon people handing you something. I would much rather be the giver than the receiver. God has promised that, as long as we are faithful and fulfill His Word, He will make sure that we always have sufficient means to abound to every good work. If we wish to have sufficiency to abound to every good work, we must heed the words of our Lord in Luke 6:38: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into

your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

God said He is going to give to us according to the same measure that we give. If we give grudgingly, we can receive grudgingly. If we give sparingly, we can receive sparingly. But note what He said: we are to give good measure, pressed down and shaken together.

If you do not understand that, consider this illustration. Get a five-gallon bucket and fill it absolutely to the top with corn. Put it in the back of your truck or golf cart and drive about one hundred or one hundred fifty yards. When you get out and look at your five-gallon bucket full of corn, you will find that it is down about three or four inches. When He says, "Give, pressed down, shaken together," He means that you get everything into that thing that you can possibly get.

It is indeed a blessing to give, and certainly it is a blessing to receive as well, especially when you need it. But let me tell you something that has happened to me innumerable times. I have been in meetings, and all of a sudden a little girl or little boy, three, four, or five years old, comes up to me and just stands there, kind of doing like this in front of me. I bend down and say, "Did you want to say something to me?" "Yes." Then they cram that little hand out, I open my hand, and they drop a penny in it.

You know what I do? I thank them and tell them, "You know, I will probably need that penny one of these days. Thank you for giving to me." I want them to understand the blessing in giving. Obviously, it was a blessing to me to receive a penny. It was a penny more than I ever had at that particular time. So God says it is more blessed to give than to receive. Here in this passage, we are to bow and worship when we are able to give.

Sixth Instance: Bowing When the Fire of God Falls (2 Chronicles 7)

In 2 Chronicles 7, we have the sixth instance of bowing and worship. Verse 3 says, "And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and

worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth forever." This passage deals with the dedication of the Temple. In context, Solomon has prayed, and a sacrifice has been placed upon the altar. When Solomon finishes praying, God sends fire down from Heaven, lights that altar, and consumes the sacrifice. If you study Leviticus chapter 9, verse 24, when the tabernacle was dedicated and the sacrifice was on the altar, again God sent fire from Heaven and consumed that sacrifice.

In 1 Kings chapter 18, when Elijah challenged the priests of Baal, he built the altar, put the sacrifice on it, and poured water over the sacrifice and all around it. The Bible says he prayed, and the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water in the trench. In each of these instances the fire of God fell. What is the significance of the fire of God falling?

How is it, and why is it, that we should bow and worship when we understand this? First, the fire speaks of God's acceptance of the sacrifice. When that fire fell on the tabernacle, it was God's fire, and He was accepting the sacrifice. When the fire fell in the temple, it was God's fire, and He was accepting the sacrifice. When the fire fell on Mount Carmel, it was God's fire, and He was accepting that sacrifice. Remember that Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron, priests, offered strange fire unto the Lord, and God killed them. Why? Because it was not His fire.

In the Old Testament, it was the fire of God that fell and consumed the sacrifice, indicating that God was pleased with and accepted the sacrifice. It was still the same fire—the fire of God's wrath—that fell upon the perfect sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our propitiation, our sacrifice, our substitute, and our surety. Isaiah 53 and verse 10 says, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief, when he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Note: it pleased the Lord to bruise him. When the Bible says, "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," that means Him taking the wrath and anger of God as our substitute. That is why the Bible tells you in Romans 3

and verse 23, "being justified freely by His grace, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation for our sins."

God the Father set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation for our sins. The Greek word for propitiation is hilasterion, and it literally means to placate and to satisfy. God set forth Jesus Christ in order that Christ might placate and satisfy the wrath of God, the justice of God, and the holiness of God, and that is exactly what He did.

When the fire falls, first, it indicates that God has accepted the sacrifice. The fact that He raised Jesus Christ from the dead demonstrates again that He accepted the sacrifice. Secondly, when the fire falls it also speaks of the consumption or destruction of His enemies.

The Fire of God and the Destruction of Enemies

John the Baptist was preaching in Matthew chapter 3. The Bible tells us that the people resorted unto him, but scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees also came. What did he say when he saw them? He said, "O generation of vipers, who have warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

John is speaking to two groups: some who are repentant and some who are not repentant. In Matthew 3 and verse 11, he said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

I have heard people say, "I want to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire." I do not. I want to be baptized with the Holy Ghost, that is for sure, but not with fire. John is speaking to two groups. One will be baptized with the Holy Spirit; the other will be baptized with fire, because the falling of fire often demonstrates that God is consuming and destroying His enemies.

Remember Genesis 19 and verse 24: "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone out of heaven." The fire fell. Numbers 11, verses 1 through 3, says, "And when the people complained, It displeased the Lord, and the Lord heard it, and His anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp." It was

called Taberah because it indicates a burning. The people were in rebellion against God, and God consumed them with fire.

Consider 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. This is one of my favorite passages. You may ask why; I want you to see what it says. We are talking about the fire of the Lord falling—not only accepting the sacrifice that God provided, but also consuming and devouring His enemies. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 7: "And to you who are troubled rest with us." Here is what the Apostle is saying: if you are troubled, take a minute and rest. Here is what is going to give you rest. Watch: "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, because our testimony among you is believed in that day."

Isn't that interesting? When Christ comes back, He is going to come back in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fire in the Bible always speaks of destruction.

Look into the book of Revelation chapter 19. Here is a passage that most of you should be familiar with: "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Hallelujah, salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are His judgments. For He has judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of His servants at her hand."

"And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne saying, Amen, Alleluia." The smoke of their torment speaks of fire. God sent fire to consume His enemies. Revelation 20:9 says, "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."

When the fire falls, it not only speaks of God's acceptance of the sacrifice; it also speaks of consuming those who are in rebellion against Him. Turn back to Psalm 58, and consider a passage that relates to the destruction of God's enemies. I hope it will help you understand Revelation 19 a little better, when the saints of the Lord said, “Amen, Hallelujah,” at the destruction of God's enemies.

In Psalm 58:10, the psalmist is speaking about the wicked. Go back to verse 3: “The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born speaking lies.” Verse 4 says, “Their poison is like the poison of a serpent, they are like the deaf adder that stop at their ear.” He is talking about the wicked. Now look at verse 10: “...the righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, so that a man shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous. Verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth.” Notice that he said, “...the righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.” What does that mean?

It means he will be saying, “Amen, Hallelujah.” I have a sneaking suspicion that we will probably also be bowing and worshipping and saying, “Lord thank you for your grace. Thank you for your mercy to me.” We will understand that there is a reward for the righteous and that there is a God that judgeth in the earth. When the fire falls, it not only speaks of God's acceptance of the sacrifice; it also speaks of the destruction of His enemies. But thirdly, it speaks in the Bible of what you and I would call revival.

The Fire of God and Revival

Do you know that one of the most famous Christian publications of all times, and I suppose it is not even in existence today, was titled Revival Fires? Leonard Ravenhill, I think, published that. He has been dead many, many years. Revival Fires.

You know, the Bible says in Psalm 110, verse 3, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” In other words, when God speaks, and God speaks in power, His people listen. Let me show you. I want you to turn to two passages: Deuteronomy chapter 5 and 1 Kings 18. We are going to begin in Deuteronomy chapter 5, and then we are going to 1 Kings 18.

In Deuteronomy 5, look at verse 24. Remember, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” Deuteronomy 5, verse 24: “And you said, Behold, the Lord our God hath showed us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire, and we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and He liveth.” Note this: God spoke out of the fire, and they said, “We heard His voice, God speaks with us.”

Now turn right over to 1 Kings chapter 18, because this is the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Elijah had set up this contest. If you look in verse 24, he let them choose their own bullock, he let them build their altar, and he let them go first in everything. He said, “And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord, And the Lord that answereth by fire, let him be God.” All the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.” Did you hear that? “Let him that answereth by fire, let him be God.” And the people said, “Yes.”

So the prophets and priests of Baal took their own bullock and began, in verse 26, crying, “O Baal, hear us, O Baal, hear us.” Nothing happened. They jumped on the altar, cut themselves, and started bleeding, but nothing happened. If you look in verse 27: “It came to pass at noon that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god.”

Elijah said of Baal, “Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey. Or perventure he sleepeth and must be awakened.” In other words, he was mocking. The prophets of Baal cried and did everything they could, but nothing happened, because Baal is not a god.

When it came time for the evening sacrifice, it was Elijah’s turn. “And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.”

Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and said, “The Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God.” What was God doing? He was turning the hearts of the people back to Himself. It is what we would call a revival.

In Jeremiah 23:29, God asks, “Is not my word like a fire and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” God’s word is like a fire. Sometimes God uses that fire to punish His enemies; sometimes He uses it to awaken and refresh His people.

Seventh Instance: Bowing in Revival (2 Chronicles 29)

This brings us to the seventh instance of bowing and worshipping, in 2 Chronicles 29. “And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped. Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the seer. And they sang praise with gladness and they bowed their heads and worshipped.” One of the greatest revivals in the Bible took place under Hezekiah.

The Temple was cleansed from its impurities, and the images placed there by the Judean kings were taken out. The sacrifice was reestablished. The priesthood and the Levites were sanctified, and the Passover was observed in such a way that it had not been observed previously.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 29:1-11 (KJV)

Now I want you to get just a glimpse of what took place here. Let us go back to verse 1 of 2 Chronicles 29 and read the first eleven verses.

“Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that David his father had done. He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.

> "And he brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them together into the east street. And he said unto them, Hear me ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers. And carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed, and have done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitations of the Lord, and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense, nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as you see with your eyes.
>
> "For lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons, and our daughters, and our wives are in captivity for this. Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, be not now negligent, for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, and to serve Him, and that you should minister unto Him, and burn incense."
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> Remember, he is talking now to the Levites and the priests. What Hezekiah does is get the priests and the Levites out and remind them of their duties and responsibilities. He tells them how they had trespassed against God—not just the priests and the Levites, because they had not been giving the morning and evening sacrifice, none of this stuff, but all the people had trespassed against God as well. So he wants to renew the covenant with the Lord.

Look in verse 15: "And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves." We are talking about the priests and the Levites. "And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord. And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it. They brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord, and the Levites

took it to carry it out abroad unto the brook Kidron. Now they began on the first day of the month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the Lord. So they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days, and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end."

"Then they went into Hezekiah the king and said, We have cleansed all the house of the Lord, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the showbread table with all the vessels thereof. Moreover, all the vessels which King Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and behold, they are before the altar of the Lord." Then Hezekiah the king arose early and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. The rest of this chapter tells about the offering and sacrifice they made, and how God moved upon the people.

Here is the astounding thing: the Levites and the priests went in and cleansed the filth out of the house of God. That does not mean merely the dirt; it means all those false images and all the other trash that the unbelieving kings had put in there. It took them eight days. May I remind you that there were thousands of Levites? How many worked in the temple, I do not know. And the priesthood—yes, there was only one high priest, but there was a priestly family. Aaron had Eliezer, Nadab, and Abihu, and there was another son, Ithamar. You know there was a priestly family. But if there was nothing but one hundred Levites, eight days?

When God revives your heart, encourages your heart, or revives your work or your people, your proper response is to bow and worship. We may not have in our day and time a great revival the way Hezekiah did—I hope we do, and I pray we do—but whatever God does for us, even the tiniest little bit of encouragement, we should bow and worship. The Bible says in Psalm 92:4, "For thou Lord hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph, I will triumph in the works of thy hands." So whenever God makes us glad, we should bow and worship.

We should be thankful for anything and everything. We have an old clawfoot bathtub, and I get in that bathtub and lie back. The first thing that comes out of my mouth is, "Thank you, Lord, for a hot

bath.” Then you begin to think of the people in the world who cannot even have a bath, and some who cannot even have a hot bath. One of our men and his wife just got back from a trip to Uganda, and he said, “Oh, we had no hot water.”

Eighth Instance: Bowing at the Reading of God's Word (Nehemiah 8)

He said, "I can resonate with that." Understand that God can encourage us in so many ways if we would just stop and be thankful for anything and everything that He has done for us. That is an encouragement to me.

There is one last point. Turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah 8:6. You must understand the context, but I want you to see it. Here the Bible says, "And Ezra blessed the people. And Ezra blessed the Lord and the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands, and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." So here is the last instance in the Bible of people bowing and worshipping.

In order to understand this, you must see the context. Go back to verse 1: "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate. And they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month." Then, "And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women and those that could understand, and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law."

How many of you would come at six o’clock in the morning and listen to me read Scripture until noon? Yet notice what happened. Verse four says, “And Ezra the scribe stood upon a little bit of wood which they had made for that purpose. And beside him they list all the Levites that are standing there.” Verse five says, “And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen,

Amen. And with lifting up their hands they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground."

Notice the middle part of verse seven: "And the Levites caused the people to understand the law, so the people stood in their place. So they, Ezra and the Levites, read in the book of the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused the people to understand the reading."

Here is the point: they were not merely reading Scripture during the first half of the day. During the second half, they were expounding, explaining, and applying Scripture so that the people could understand the reading. How often do you read the Word of God? How often do you hear the Word of God? How often do you hear the Word of God expounded, explained, and applied? How often have you thought about the Word of God? Each time we think of it, we should also bow and worship God for it. God has given us His Word, and God has given us teachers.

The Bible says He gave pastor teachers as a gift to the Church. How often have we thought about the value of the Word of God and hearing the Word of God? I believe that, outside of the grace of God, the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the next greatest gift is His Word.

Think about all the countries that do not have the Word of God, and all the people who do not hear it. Think about the people in this country who would not even walk across the street to hear the Word of God, who will not even pick up a Bible in their own home and read it. Think about what God has shown us, of which most even professing Christians are totally ignorant. Think about the truth to which God has opened your eyes. I started to say how many, but I could change it to how few.

When we really grasp God's sovereignty, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability—anything about God—whenever we hear or read the Word of God, we should bow and worship. Does it take long? But we should thank God for it. The Bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus."

Applications: Practice Spontaneous Worship Daily

I thought, coming to church this morning, about some folks who are so hard-hearted, even though they profess to be Christians. I was praying for them, and I thought, “Lord, I may be hard-hearted, but I thank You that I am not hard-hearted in those particular areas.” I know families where sons will not even speak to their fathers and children will not speak to their mothers. I cannot grasp or conceive of that, and yet it is there.

All I am saying is that we should learn to give God thanks for every bit of truth He gives us. We should learn to give God thanks for the tenderness in our hearts and lives that He has given us. There is never a bad time and never a wrong time to bow and worship.

You should always be bowing and worshiping. Whenever your mind comes upon a particular blessing or goodness God has given or shown you, you need to bow and worship. It may be done publicly or privately, but certainly it should be done spontaneously. Whenever we are particularly blessed, enlightened, protected, preserved, and providentially cared for, we should bow and worship.

One of my favorite passages, which I quote every day, is Lamentations 3:22–23: “It is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed. Because his compassions, they fail not. They're new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness.” Every morning, you should bow and worship and thank God that He has allowed you to live through the night. When you go to bed, before you close your eyes, you should bow in worship and thank God that He has allowed you to live through the day.

We have so much to be thankful, grateful, and appreciative for that we should be constantly and continually giving praise, honor, and worship to our great and glorious God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that most people have to work. I understand that.

I know you can't sit at a desk with an open Bible all day long. But it really doesn't matter whether you're digging ditches, driving, or sitting down. When some thought or blessing comes to your mind, you should simply bow and worship. It may take you a second, but fine, do it. Acknowledge and recognize God. The Bible tells us,

Hebrews 13 and verse 15, "By Him, that is by the Lord Jesus Christ, by Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise unto God continually, the fruit of our lips giving thanks unto His name."

We should learn to be thankful and appreciative. No one wants to give to an unthankful, ungrateful, unappreciative child—not even God. The second application is this: we should learn to be thankful, especially for the Word of God, for the ministry, and for the Brotherhood of the Saints. I've had people say to me countless numbers of times, and I've said it myself, "I'm far more comfortable around my spiritual family than I am my physical family." And that's true, because there is a stronger bond in the faith than there is in the flesh.

We should learn to be thankful for our husbands, wives, sons, daughters, and friends. There is so much for which we could always bow, worship, and thank God. I want to encourage you to practice bowing and worship. Just drop your head and say, "Thank you, Lord, for this," and keep going. You'll be amazed at how many times during the day you'll catch yourself worshipping God, thanking Him, and praising Him for the grace in your life—for health, life, sleep, rest, food, or anything that comes to your mind. Thank, bow, and worship.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for the truth of bowing and worship. We thank Thee, Lord, that there is such a thing as spontaneous worship, where our hearts are so moved, grateful, and appreciative that we cannot help but bow and say, "Thou art God, and I thank Thee." Help us, Lord, to live for Thee and to glorify Thy great name. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, amen.

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