



**Worship – Part 34**  
**Acts of Worship – Part 22**  
**Worshipping God with Our Treasure – Part 6**  
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When we think of the word “love,” many things may come to mind because it is a many faceted term. You can love your spouse and you can love your house. You can love your children and you can love chocolate. You can love your friends and you can love watching football on TV. When thinking about love you may imagine the intimate relationship you have with your spouse or you may reflect on what Jesus did for you on the Cross.

Love, in any sense of the word, can move people to do crazy things. An avid fan’s love for his team can move him to paint his body and act like an utter fool on national television. A mother’s love for her child can give her supernatural strength to protect that child; as accounts have been documented of lifting a car that was on top of a child, and other stories. A believer’s love for Jesus Christ can allow them to willingly be martyred in place of denying their faith.

What else in this world apart from love can motivate such behavior?

Unfortunately, an unhealthy or perverted love can also elicit extreme responses. When the object of your love is prohibited by God then that one sin will lead to many others. Forbidden love, whether it is improper love for another person or something material, will always spiral downward, if left unchecked and un-repentant.

Last week in this series called “Worshipping God with Our Treasure” we devoted our time to understanding the rivalry within each of us between serving God and serving mammon. Jesus clearly told us that we cannot split our allegiances; if you love mammon, meaning your money and possessions and desires, then you literally will hate or despise God (**Matthew 6:24**). You will serve that which you truly love, and that is the sin of idolatry if the object of your love is anything other than God.

Tonight I want to further develop this thought, and in doing so I will be borrowing some material from a sermon I heard recently by John Bevere on the topic of intimacy with God.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **James 4**.

**James 4:8a**

Let’s pray.

James says, “**Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**” Let me ask you a question: Who draws first? – We do. It is our responsibility to draw near to God and if we do God guarantees that He will draw near to us. So get this point even if you drift off for the rest of the evening: You are in total control of your relationship with God. You are the one who determines the level of your relationship with God. Let the truth of this small piece of a verse of Scripture sink in.

Do you want a deeper relationship with God? You are in control of that. Do you desire intimacy with God? It’s yours for the taking. Would you like to be called a friend of God? Then be a friend of God for that designation is in your hands. You and you alone are the one who determines the level of your relationship with God. I can’t do that for you, your Christian friends can’t do that for you, your spouse can’t do that for you, coming to church and listening to this sermon can’t do that for you, and it is even not God that does this for you; only you can determine the level of your relationship with God. It is up to you to draw near to Him if you desire for Him to draw near to you.

Most Christians will look at people like Billy Graham, or A.W. Tozer, or C.S. Lewis, or Martin Luther, or Charles Spurgeon, or even their own pastor and think that they were born with a divine star above their crib. Can I tell you a secret, they weren't close to God because of some divine birthright; they drew near to God and He in turn drew near to them. They were close to God because they chose to be.

You can be as close to God as you want to be. There is absolutely no excuse for any Christian to not be close to God. Your busy schedule is no excuse. Your health is no excuse. Your family situation is no excuse. Your financial struggles are no excuse. Any other reason you have allowed yourself to be entangled with this world and thus detracted from developing your relationship with God is no excuse. Nobody in this room tonight has a valid excuse for not being in a close, loving, vibrant, intimate relationship with God. There is absolutely no excuse!

**"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."**

Let me add this thought: God passionately desires this type of relationship with you infinitely more than you desire it with Him. God is passionate for you! God yearns for you! God desires you!

Look up at **James 4:5**. God jealously desires to dwell within us and with us.

In **1 Thessalonians 5:17**, God says, **"Pray without ceasing."** Let me ask you something; is prayer a monologue or a dialogue? Is prayer a one-way communication or is it a two-way communication? So when God commands us to pray without ceasing He is telling us that He is not only willing but desiring to communicate with you without ceasing. Now I don't know about you but that gets me excited.

Communicating with God is more than just words, isn't it? My wife can look at me and speak volumes. Just a look from her and I could probably write several pages of what she is communicating. 28 years ago that look would not have communicated with me more than a sentence or two; now it can communicate pages and pages. What's the difference between now and 28 years ago? The relationship is much deeper. We share an intimacy with each other that is only possible through years of getting to know one another; years of communicating; years of sharing and loving and struggling together.

God desires to be in constant communication and relationship with you, and it is your choice. Let me show you just how much God desires an intimate relationship with you.

Hold your place in James and turn with me in your Bibles to **Psalm 139**.

#### **Psalm 139:17-18a**

Fisherman may exaggerate, politicians may exaggerate, and even preachers may exaggerate, but God cannot exaggerate can He? Exaggeration is actually a form of deceitfulness and Scripture tells us God cannot lie. So when God says that His thoughts toward us; His thoughts toward you; outnumber the grains of sand on this earth, that is a staggering statement. If you had a box that was one-foot wide, one-foot deep, and one-foot tall, meaning one cubit foot in volume and you filled it up with sand from the nearest beach and then set yourself to counting how many grains there were, you would count to about 1.8 billion grains. That's just one cubit foot of sand. It is absolutely staggering to even try to comprehend how much God desires an intimate relationship with you!

God is passionate in His desire to have an intimate relationship with you.

Go back to **James 4**, and let's look at the primary reason we do not have the intimate relationship with God that He desires, and hopefully you also desire.

#### **James 4:8**

After God tells us to draw near to Him, He then tells us to, "**Cleanse your hands, you sinners.**" The problem for most Christians is that they do not think of themselves when they hear the word sinner. Allow me to clue you in; James wrote this Book to believers. Fifteen times in this small Book, James says, "**My brethren.**" He is not talking to unbelievers when he says to "**cleanse your hands, you sinners.**"

God has not pulled away from us we have pulled away from Him. The reason we do not have the relationship with God that we should is because we tolerate sin. And the reason we tolerate sin is because we do not fully understand the definition of sin or we have categorized sin and have ranked its severity; and as long as we do not commit the more severe sins we have justified that we are righteous. The Catholic Church has gone as far as to list what they call, "mortal sins" in their effort to define and categorize sin.

We have picked up on this faulty teaching and will list murder, rape, incest, adultery, child abuse, drug abuse, drunkenness, burglary, and a whole slew of other offences as "real" sins. By doing this we have lessened the severity or even removed the offences of lying and disobedience and gossip, etc., from the category of sin.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **1 John 3**.

#### **1 John 3:4**

God's definition of sin is lawlessness. The Greek word that is translated as lawlessness (*anomia*) is the harshest of all the words that define sin. Some words for sin denote a form of ignorance, meaning you sin because you were not fully aware it was a sin, but *anomia* means a willing and knowing disobedience to the authority of God.

When Adam was in the garden he did not sin by smoking a joint. Adam didn't run off with his secretary and Adam didn't murder anyone. But Adam's sin had severe consequences that are still being felt today by all of us in this world. Adam's sin was disobedience to God's Word, pure and simple. And that is the meaning of the word *anomia*. When we disobey anything that God has commanded we are committing sin; we are being lawless. Any form of disobedience to God's Word places us in the category of a sinner; and sin separates us from God. We choose to pull away from God as opposed to drawing near to Him every time we disobey.

Let me illustrate in another way. Turn with me in your Bibles to **Luke 14**.

#### **Luke 14:16-24**

This parable of our Lord illustrates the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. And just in case any of you may not know what this Supper is, let me briefly explain. At the end of the age, after Jesus has once and for all eradicated sin, evil, Satan, and death, God is going to throw the greatest party this world has ever seen. The people who will be attending this party are the redeemed; those who have responded to the gospel message of Jesus Christ. The honored guests at this party are those who have believed in their heart that Jesus came to this earth, lived a sinless life, was crucified for their sins, was raised to life again on the third day, and have confessed Him as the Lord of their life in repentance of their sins.

Let's look at the ones in this parable who were invited but will not be there.

#### **v. 18**

Is it a sin to buy a piece of land?

**v. 19**

Is it a sin to purchase oxen, or in to purchase office equipment or supplies for your business?

**v. 20**

Is it a sin to get married?

The answer to all of these questions is, of course not. The sin was not in their actions, the sin was in doing these things in place of instant obedience to God's call.

Now there are two primary applications for us to draw out of this parable. First, and foremost, is if you are here tonight and you do not have a confirmed reservation for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, meaning you have not believed in your heart that Jesus was raised from the dead and you have not confessed with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, then you are in the company of those who asked to be excused from this Supper. You have rejected the invitation from God to be one of His children. You will be among those whom Jesus has eradicated. You will be joining Satan, his demons, and all who have rejected Jesus Christ through the ages, in eternal hell.

But you still have time to accept the invitation. God's Word tells us that today is the day of salvation and that God's gift of salvation is open to all who will come. So do not leave here tonight without responding to this gracious invitation.

The second application is for believers. In this parable we are given a wake up call to the definition of sin; and that is anything other than instant obedience. Delayed obedience is the same as disobedience. The actions of the people in this parable were not sinful in and of themselves, but because they choose those actions over instant obedience, it was indeed sin. And the result of this sin was disastrous in lives of these people.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Psalm 51**.

**Psalm 51:14-17**

How many of you truly understand what brokenness is? This is ranching country so the best illustration I can give of brokenness deals with horses. Think about what it means for a horse to be broken. You could have the most beautiful and powerful horse in this entire county, but if it is nor broken it will be of very little use. Climbing up onto the back of that horse to herd cattle or anything else will be fruitless, and quite possibly dangerous.

When a horse is broken, you can get that horse to do whatever the rider, the master, wants him to do. If that horse was taken into battle, he would not flinch at the commotion or the guns or the clanging swords, he would simply do the bidding of his master. Broken horses are used by their master. Other more gifted, more beautiful, faster horses will be left behind in the stables when the master has need, if they are not broken.

This is the picture we need to see. We cannot draw near to God at the same time we are separating ourselves from Him by a lack of instant obedience to His Word.

And here is the primary reason that American Christians struggle with being broken: We are attempting to live by kingdom principles with a democratic mindset. The kingdom of God is not a democracy, it's a kingdom! America's view of submission is this: "I will submit as long as I agree." Beloved, there is no such thing as submission apart from disagreement. You aren't submitting if you agree; submitting means you are surrendering your will to His.

The master doesn't have to get off the horse, grab a hold of the harness, get nose-to-nose with the horse and explain to him the reasons he must go to work or go into battle. If the horse is

broken, the master just nudges and the horse responds. The horse and the rider do not come to an agreement by popular vote or discussion.

Here is the key; and if Christians around this globe could grasp this there would be a world-wide revival in every church; we must believe what we read, not read what we believe. Let me say that again. You must believe what you read in God's Word, not read what you believe.

What do I mean when I say we read what we believe? I mean we take and add all of our preconceived notions with us when we read God's Word. And we allow the particular mindset we have to influence what God is saying. We dismiss passages that do not fit with our theology. We overemphasize passages that we agree with at the exclusion of passages that seem to be saying something different.

In a recent, email devotion I related the story of the Puritans and the Quakers. The Puritans were a godly group of people who devoted their lives to the study and application of Scripture. They believed and practiced everything God revealed in His Word. They enjoyed the gifts of the Holy Spirit and were part of the great revivals in the 1500's. A group of Puritans began overemphasizing the Holy Spirit to the exclusion of God's Word even. They taught nothing but living your life according to the Spirit's leading. And while this is an accurate teaching, they began lessening the importance of the Bible. This cause a division amongst the Puritans and a split occurred, forming the Quakers.

Because the Quakers had gone too far in their beliefs and understanding about the Holy Spirit, the natural response for the remaining Puritans was to overemphasize the Bible and lessen their emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Shortly after this split and these two imbalances in theology, the great revivals ended. Satan accomplished his task by bringing a division and causing each of these groups to read what they believe instead of believing what they were reading.

Can I be so bold as to say you must believe what you read whether you understand it or not? You must do this because that is the fear of the Lord and the fear of the Lord is the very beginning of wisdom and understanding.

The Bible tells us that when Jesus returns, His children will be just like Him because we will see Him as He is. So if we are going to be just like Jesus, that means one of us will have to change.

**Isaiah 1:19** says, "**If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land.**" It takes more than our actions to be broken and submissive to God. It takes more than outward appearances to draw near to God. Our attitudes must accompany our obedience if we are to draw near to Him.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Psalm 25** and I will wrap this up tonight.

#### **Psalm 25:14a**

How many of you have secrets? There are good secrets and bad secrets but all of us have secrets. Let me ask you this; who do you share secrets with, your most intimate friends or casual acquaintances? – Your intimate friends. God is the same way.

The NLT translates this verse this way: "**Friendship with the Lord is reserved for those fear Him.**"

Abraham was a friend of God. He was a friend of God because he feared God and he exhibited that fear by immediately obedience to Him. When God told Abraham to travel three days journey and sacrifice his only son Isaac to him, the Bible says that early the next morning Abraham packs

up and heads out. God did not tell Abraham why, He did not give Abraham any other details, He only told him to travel three days and to kill his son as a sacrifice to God.

I have to laugh on the inside when I hear Christians tell me that God has been working on them for several months about a certain area of their life. Maybe they are trying to get rid of a bad habit or maybe they are trying to start a new one, but comments of God has been working on me for several months, meaning God is telling them to do something, and you still haven't done it just shows me your utter lack of fearing the Lord. If you truly fear the Lord you will obey immediately! And immediate obedience is required if you truly desire to draw near to Him.

Now what does any of this have to do with worshipping God with your treasure, and how do my introductory comments about love fit in? You will have to come back next week.

**“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”**

Let's pray.