



**Worship – Part 35**  
**Acts of Worship – Part 23**  
**Worshipping God with Our Treasure – Part 7**  
**GCSP – 01/26/2008**

Let's pray.

Last week I opened our time together in God's Word with an illustration about love; how we love many things and how love can motivate you to do things you would not do for any other reason. I also mentioned that 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-repented.

I then went on to preach primarily on one sentence from **James 4:8**; "**Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**" That short sentence from God tells us that you are the one who determines the level of your relationship with Him. If you desire to have a close relationship with God you can; it's up to you and you alone. And since the vast majority of Christians in this world do not have a close relationship with God, the only conclusion we can draw is they truly do not want a close relationship with God.

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!

And let me reiterate the same point from these last few statements: Since there is no valid excuse for not having a close and intimate relationship with God, the only conclusion we can rightfully draw is that most Christians simply do not want a close and intimate relationship with God.

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!

**Psalm 139:17-18** tells us that His thoughts toward us; His thoughts toward you; outnumber the grains of sand on this earth, and that is a staggering statement. It is absolutely staggering to even try to comprehend how much God desires an intimate relationship with you!

We then saw in next phrase in **James 4:8** that the problem for most Christians is that they do not think of themselves when they hear the word sinner. 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.

According to **1 John 3:4**, God's definition of sin is lawlessness; which means a willing and knowing disobedience to the authority of God.

In **Luke 14:16-24** we saw sin was in doing things in place of instant obedience to God.

**Psalm 51:14-17** showed us that brokenness is the key to learning to be instantly obedient to God; and I used the illustration of the difference between a horse that is broken and one that is not. A broken horse is useful to its master and does exactly what the master wants at exactly the moment the master desires. A horse that is not broken, even if it is faster, more powerful, more gifted, and more beautiful, will be staying behind in the stables instead of being used by its master.

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!

I also spoke to the fact that you must believe what you read in God's Word, not read what you believe; and you must believe it whether you understand it or not. When you believe God's Word even when you do not understand it you are exhibiting the fear of the Lord; and the fear of the Lord is the very beginning of wisdom and understanding.

We then saw in **Isaiah 1:19** that it takes more than our actions to be broken and submissive to God. Our attitudes must accompany our obedience if we are to draw near to Him.

I wrapped up last week with the common occurrence of Christians telling 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.

So what did all of that have to do with worshipping God with your treasure? The answer is everything! For most Christians, money and possessions is their true god. If the typical Christian's thoughts were recorded and written down each day you would have no problem determining who their god was. All you would have to do is tally up what they dwelled upon the most. And since the Bible has more to say in the area of money and possessions than any other issue, it would be a pretty safe bet to say that Christians dwell on money and possessions more than they dwell on God. And as we studied two weeks ago, Jesus said we cannot serve both; as a matter of fact Jesus said if we are dwelling on or serving our money and possessions then we actually despise God.

Ask the typical "Christian" what they dislike the most about the church and somewhere in his or her top five answers will be that the pastor preaches about money all the time.

In the first 2½ years of Grace Church I have never preached about money yet I am lumped in that same category and people who only attend church sporadically will here

one of the sermons in this current series and come to the conclusion that all I preach about is money. Why is that? Because these "Christians" have never drawn near to God, and thus God has never drawn near to them. And I will be so bold to say that if you are not in a close and intimate relationship with God then He is not truly the God and Lord of your life.

Beloved, I am saying some hard words tonight, but they are words that need to be said. I believe with my whole heart that we are living in the last days and none of us have the luxury of playing games with our Christian lives. We don't have time to waste another year of half-hearted devotion to God. We don't have time to get our acts together. God is calling His true disciples to a life of devotion and consecration and worship and obedience to His Word, so that we can be His genuine ambassadors to a world that is coming apart at the seams due to the growing influence of Satan.

And I am convinced that the love of money is the one of, if not the, primary problem.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Deuteronomy 8**.

### **Deuteronomy 8:1-14**

The Children of Israel are on the threshold of entering the Promised Land. They have been wandering around the desert for forty years on account of their sin. During the forty years all of those who were afraid to enter the land the first time, as God had commanded, have now died off; never to experience the blessings God had for them. And before we work our way through this passage, allow me to make a quick application for us: We forfeit God's blessings every time we disobey His Word. All of the Children of Israel could have entered the land and experienced the tremendous blessing of God but many traded that in for forty years of bitterness and death; what a horrible choice they made, and what a horrible choice we make when we disobey God's Word.

We all go through our own personal wilderness experiences from time to time in our Christian lives, so I am going to apply the admonitions and commands Moses is giving to the Children of Israel, to our lives tonight.

The key to this entire passage is found in the last few verses, where Moses basically says, if you are not very careful your money and possessions, and the pursuit of money and possessions, will cause you to forget God. Your god will become money and possessions. And God has an iron-clad promise for those who forget Him in **verses 19-20**.

### **Deuteronomy 8:19-20**

So let's look at the options again: Obedience = unimaginable blessing; disobedience = perishing. We know what choice Israel made; the question remains as to which choice you will make.

#### **v. 1** – *Be careful to do.*

You and I may not have the promise of hundreds of square miles of choice land but we do indeed have many other promises from God; most under the condition of obedience just like Israel at this time. God never goes back on a promise does He? It is God's desire to bless you beyond measure but His promises do come with the condition of

obedience to His Word. So we must **be careful to do** what He tells us to do. Good intentions don't cut it; delayed obedience doesn't cut it; half-hearted obedience doesn't cut it; and obviously disobedience doesn't cut it.

If you want to experience the unimaginable, divine, miraculous, abundant blessing of God, you can. It is within your power to experience all that God has in store for you. All you have to do is to **be careful to do** what He says.

And let me speak a word to those who may think they are deserving of God's blessings. What do have left when you take the "de" off of the word deserving? What remains, is the word "serving." Deserving literally means, for serving, or for service. We are only deserving of God's blessing then if we serve Him; and our service comes in the form of instant obedience to His Word.

#### **v. 2** – *Remember.*

The key word in this verse is "**remember.**" We must look back on the recent past to glean from it. We must take the time to examine our victories and our failures. We must see God's hand in all of it to ascertain what He was teaching us and how He led us through. Probably the greatest single motivator for us to endure and persevere through the tough times is to **remember** the past times when God brought us through the storms of life. Focusing on God's faithfulness is a tremendous way to get your mind off of the current struggles and afflictions; and it will also help you see the tremendous work God is doing in your life through your trial – through your time wandering in the desert.

Our trials are the times when we have the golden opportunity to prove that the Lord is our God; it is a time when we can shout, "Yes, Lord, my heart belongs to You and I will keep Your commandments despite the temporary troubles I am experiencing!" It is during the desert times of your life that you can proclaim with God's servant Job, "**The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord**" (**Job 1:21b**).

#### **v. 3-4** – *Understand.*

It's hard to be humble just about any time, but it is especially hard during times of plenty. The desert experiences of our lives are the times when we are more receptive to learning humility. We learn to lean on God and God alone in the tender times; the times when all of our resources and false bravado are exhausted. We are ready to listen; we are open to God's way of doing things; our spiritual ears are tuned in to hearing from God; and we finally **understand** that we live **by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.**

When you reach the point of understanding; when you have been humbled by the Lord; you are then able to look back and see how God was providing for you all along. Your minds are now clear enough to see His provision and His love and His care and His compassion for you. Before you reach that point you are blind to these things. Before you reach that point all you see is the pain and the heartache; you cannot see the hand of God because your focus is much too narrow, like a horse with blinders on.

I submit to you that if you could see what God was doing during these times, you would not question what has been done.

As a 7-year old boy I was on the fast track to becoming Mr. Popularity in my school. I had all of the characteristics. I was athletic, I had a charismatic personality, I had a good sense of humor, I was comfortable in front of a crowd, and I was good looking enough to not be shunned by those who valued that sort of thing. To a certain extent, the path of my life was being formed by the world's mold.

Through what I thought was an accident, that summer I caught a stick in my right eye and almost had to have that eye removed. The damage to my right eye was irreversible. I am functionally blind in that eye still today. The damage also immediately caused my left eye to become severely nearsighted. When I returned to school, I did so wearing glasses, and in 1966 it was definitely not cool to be wearing glasses. Literally overnight, my standing as Mr. Popularity vanished. For the next seven years I was somewhat of an outcast and I went from having everyone as a friend to a select few who still called me friend. All because of the stigma of wearing glasses.

God's hand was on my life. I didn't see it then, I didn't see it as a teenager, and I didn't even see it during my early adult years, but God's hand was on my life.

I discovered the library and began checking out books, four or five at a time. A love for reading was born that continues to this day. He altered the path my life was on as a seven-year old for the purpose of having me standing in this pulpit tonight. He preserved my life, He protected my life, and He kept me from allowing myself to be polluted by this world so that I would **understand** that I am to live **by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord**.

If I had never had that "accident" I guarantee you my life would have been radically different – and that difference would not have led me to the wife God had for me and the life God had for me. I can look back on my forty years and now see very clearly how God's hand was on everything I did.

#### **v. 5** – *Know.*

After understanding comes knowledge. You will **know in your heart** that the Lord disciplines you out of a heart of divine love. You will **know in your heart** that God will do everything it takes to get your life on the right track. You will **know in your heart** that God has pursued you and will pursue you regardless of how low you have been, or how sinful you have been, or how rebellious you have been. God loves you with an everlasting love, and that love will not allow Him to let you go too far in your sin, or to let you run away too far or too long.

#### **v. 6** – *Fear God.*

After understanding and knowledge you will truly fear the Lord. You will **keep His commandments** and you will **walk in His ways**. God's ways will become your ways. God's words will become your words. God's thoughts will become your thoughts. The fear of the Lord will keep you in a constant state of drawing near to Him, and thus He will constantly be drawing near to you. Your relationship with God will be more intimate and vibrant than you could possibly imagine.

**v. 7-9** – *Blessing.*

After understanding and knowledge and the fear of the Lord will come unimaginable blessing. What you have in your mind as blessing does not even compare to what God's idea of blessing is. When you go to the produce section of the grocery store you pick through to find the very best. Compared to God's best, we are picking through the garbage dumpster – and the sad thing is, most Christians are satisfied with the garbage dumpster.

Beloved, if you could only catch the vision of the blessing of God; if you could only see in your mind's eye what God wants to bestow upon you, your eyes would be opened to the garbage choices you are making in place of God's blessing.

**v. 10** – *Praise.*

After you experience God's unimaginable blessing you will spontaneously break out in praise and worship to your awesome God! You will not take anything He has given you for granted. Your heart will overflow with thanksgiving. Your praise will not be stifled or restrained. You will dance and lift up your hands and shout to the top of your lungs the magnificence of your God!

Can you imagine a life like that? Can you envision a life marked by obedience, and remembrance, and understanding, and knowledge, and fearing the Lord, and unimaginable blessing, and uninhibited praise and worship? Can you contain your emotions when imagining such a life?

Most Christians never get there; and it is because they have not heeded the warning in the next verses.

**v. 11-14** – *Beware.*

We get little tastes of the joy and blessing that God has for us, but unfortunately we settle for the counterfeit. Satan lures us with the counterfeit blessings of the world or he deceives us into believing that we are responsible for the things we have. And before you know it; in a flash you have traded in God for money and possessions. You have perverted God's blessing by making it an idol; making it your god.

And all the good will perish; all the obedience will perish; all the remembrance will perish; all the understanding and knowledge will perish; all the fear of the Lord will perish; all the unimaginable blessing will perish; all the genuine uninhibited praise will perish; and eventually your life and your potential for God will perish.

All of this is sacrificed for the love of money. You truly cannot serve both God and mammon.

Let's pray.