



WORSHIP AS GOD INTENDS

"9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. 11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? 12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? 13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. 15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. 17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: 18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. 19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. "

- John 4:9-24

Worship as God Intends

So when we're talking about worship, even though we look in a sense at a microcosm of a few verses in the gospel of John, we are really gathering up in our understanding something that is as vast as God's eternal purpose and plan. True, acceptable, spiritual worship is the very reason for which God sought to redeem. It is the very reason for which God created the angels to gather around His throne and praise Him, and reason for which He created and redeemed mankind to do the same gathering around the throne to praise Him, which consummation is demonstrated for us in the fourth and fifth chapter of Revelation where we see all of those who are in heaven forever praising and glorifying God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nothing is more characteristic of our lives than worship. Nothing is more directly fulfilling of God's purpose than worship. Nothing is more needed in our lives than this. Nothing is more important in the church, and it seems to me that it is diminishing in its central place. As people become more man-centered, as preaching becomes more man-centered, as the church becomes focused on unbelievers, worship is fading away.

William Temple wrote, "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, and to devote the will to the purpose of God." And that does sum up everything that worship is, and also sums up everything that we're about within the redemptive purpose of God.

We started out talking about the importance of worship, and I tried to give you some idea of its importance from a redemptive standpoint, from a biblical standpoint, both in time and eternity, et cetera. We then moved from there to talk about the source of worship. We said that the source of it is God seeking, which is efficacious, as He draws us to Himself.

We talked about the object of worship. We are to worship God. We cannot make God into what we want Him to be or who we want Him to be, we are to worship the true and living God. We are to worship, verse 24, says the God who is spirit; and verse 21 and 23, the God who is Father, namely the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is one with the Lord

Jesus Christ. And if we honor the Son, John 5:23, we honor the Father. If we do not honor the Son, we do not honor the Father, cannot honor the Father. “No man comes to the Father” – Jesus said – “but by Me.” There is no worshiping God apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

And then that leads us to the next point that I want to address and that is the – well, we looked at the sphere of worship and we said it could be anywhere, I forgot about that one. It could be anywhere, anytime, because God is a spirit and accessible to us. We are individually His temple, He dwells within us. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all the Trinity dwell in us. We are collectively as the body of Christ a holy habitation, as the apostle Paul pointed out to us in Ephesians. And that brings us then to sort of the summation of everything, and that is the nature of worship.

We work through all the other aspects of it, and this is the main feature here in this passage: the nature of worship. And let me just pick it up again and read it to you, starting in verse 22. “You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father” – here’s the key – “in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The nature of worship then is summed up. Twice it is stated here as being in spirit and truth, in spirit and truth. True worshipers the Father seeks who worship in spirit and in truth.

Now when we’re talking here about spirit we’re talking about the expression of worship. That is to say it is to be with the spirit. It is not with the body, it is not mechanical, it’s not running your thumbs over beads. It is not mindlessly repeating formal prayers. It is not mindlessly reciting some religious ceremony. It is not some mechanical means. It is from the spirit. It is from the depths of the being of the person. It is with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. It engages the mind that peruses the essence of the truth. It is from the heart where the feeling and the emotion is identified. It is what everything within us that we worship God, body being only a means of expression.

So worship is to be in spirit. That is to say it is to be with the inner man. And, secondly, it is to be in truth; and that is to say it is to be an expression of the inner man consistent with revealed truth, consistent with revealed truth. This is the balance. God wants all the emotion,

all the passion, all the soul and the spirit and the heart and the mind engaged in worship, but in perfect coordination, harmony, and agreement with revealed truth.

Now I want you to see how this unfolds in this particular passage. He says in verse 22, “We worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews.” Jesus said, “As a Jew, as one who worships according to the Old Testament, as one who worships at Jerusalem, we know, we have the knowledge. We have the Scriptures.” Romans 9 lays it out. God has given to the Jews the Scriptures, the covenants, the promises, the adoption. All of God’s revelation came through – came to and then through the people of Israel, the Jews.

So Jesus knew that the Jews had the truth, but they lacked the spirit. The leaders of Judaism are described by Jesus as whited – what? – sepulchers: outside painted white, inside full of stinking corpses. And He said, “These people draw near to Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.”

Matthew 23, Jesus reserved His strongest, most really violent language for the religious leaders of Judaism, the Pharisees. They were the religious right. They were the moralists, they were the religious right. They were the moral people, they were the people who lived according to the Jewish laws.

Paul was one of them. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, he had all the credentials. He was an Israelite. He was circumcised the eighth day. He was a Hebrew. The Hebrews, many was kosher in every way, followed all the traditions. He was a Pharisee, which was the most extreme form of legalism that existed within Judaism; and there were only about 6,000 of them in the whole nation of Israel. It was so extreme. He was, according to His own assessment, measured against the law of God. At least from an external standpoint, He was blameless, and that’s the kind of moralism, that’s the kind of legalism. That was characteristic of the religious leaders of Israel. Paul, of course, called it dung or manure when he came to the true knowledge of Christ, because it was all useless and external.

But that was pretty much – that was sort of the best of Israel. And the best you could say about the best of Israel was that they were the most consummate hypocrites. Their hypocrisy would perhaps be a question were it not for the fact that in the end of the lie of Jesus Christ, it wasn’t just the Pharisees who screamed for His blood, it was the whole crowd, wasn’t it. And

when it was all over with, how many believers were there gathered in the upper room?
Hundred and twenty.

Amazing to think about God incarnate, thirty-three years on earth, three years of ministry, which He banished disease from the nation Israel, in which He raised dead people, gave sight to blind people, hearing to deaf people, a voice to mute people, in which He healed paralytics people who had paralysis, in which He healed every other kind of disease; and He did it to the degree that He literally banished illness from the whole nation during the time of His ministry. And at the end of all of that, when they're gathered in the upper room to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, there are 120 people. You didn't just have religious leaders who were hypocrites, you had a whole nation full of people who were hypocrites. They tried to kill Him in His own hometown, didn't they? I mean, isn't it amazing to you.

In the fourth chapter of Luke, Jesus goes into His own synagogue. It says He went to the synagogue where He was raised, where He grew up. And this is His neighborhood back in Nazareth where He lived thirty years. They knew Him. There would be His relatives, His extended family relatives, all the neighbors that He grew up with. People didn't migrate around like they do in the modern world. Everybody that knew Him and knew Him through all of His life, they knew the kind of young man He was. They would never have known anything that He ever did or said that was wrong, because there never was anything to know because He never did anything that way.

And so, here was this perfect young man. He grows up, He comes back to the synagogue, and He opens up the Scripture where it was to read, and He reads out of Isaiah about the coming of the Messiah, the acceptable year of the Lord, the one who will come to deliver the poor prisoners, blind and oppressed and so forth. Salvation has arrived. He says, "Today this is fulfilled in your ears, it's talking about Me." And before the day was over, they tried to murder Him. And these were His own people, the people He knew best. This was His hometown synagogue.

That was characteristic of a people who knew in their heads the revelation. They knew what Isaiah said about the Messiah. They knew what the Old Testament said. They knew what Genesis 3 said. They knew what Exodus said about the Messiah. They knew all of that. They knew all the promises and the prophecies. They knew that the Messiah was going to bring a

kingdom in which death would be diminished; and if a person died at a hundred years of age, he would die as a baby. Didn't they know that?

It was right in the prophecies; and they knew that when the Messiah came, disease would be conquered. They knew that. They knew that when Messiah came He would have power over nature. How did they know that? Because they knew the lion would lie down with the lamb, right? He would have power to demonstrate power over the animal. He would demonstrate power over the physical creation: desert will blossom like a rose, and the river will be created going out of Jerusalem.

And Jesus came and He demonstrated power over the animal kingdom. You remember when He called the fish to go a certain place, and they jumped into the net; and Peter knew it and he said, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I'm a sinful man." And you know, He had power over the physical world, because He could make fish and make bread, and pass it out to people right out of His own hands. By His own will He could create it. They knew all of that; that was not something they hadn't experienced. It wasn't a rare occasion, it happened all the time. And one other thing: they knew the Messiah was going to have to have power to bruise the serpent's head, and that is he would have to have power to conquer the kingdom of darkness. He would have to be able to destroy Satan and all Satan's emissaries.

So Jesus showed that He could do that. And one occasion alone should have been monumentally convincing, when he and His coterie of disciples, God in the little flotilla of boats and floated across the northern top of Sea of Galilee. From Capernaum, about the six miles across to the country of the Gerasenes, Gerasa. And they went over there and they ran into the two-men coming down the hill, you remember who were possessed with demons, and the gospel writers focus on one of those men who said his name was Legion because so many demons lived in him.

And as it turned out, we know pretty much how many demons did live in him because Jesus cast those demons into a herd of swine, and the Bible tells us there were two thousand pigs, two thousand demon-possessed pigs. There were at least two thousand demons living in one person, and Jesus banished them all in one split second. And in fact, the demons were so traumatized by Him that they blew their own cover. Demons don't want to be exposed. And they kept themselves clandestine, certainly didn't want to be exposed in an environment of

Judaism. The demons want everybody to believe that the Jews were following the true religion, and so they were doing their work behind the scenes.

But, for example, Jesus goes into a synagogue and Jesus preaches the gospel in the synagogue, and all of a sudden there's a guy sitting in the synagogue, and out of him a demon screams out, "What has You to do with us, Son of the Most High God?" And the demon blows his cover because he's so traumatized by the powerful presence of God. And the guy comes down the hill, he's come down the hill all the time; he lives in the tombs.

In the eight chapter of Luke – and Matthew also records the same thing – he comes running down the hill to do his normal deal. And what was his normal deal with his buddy? They went down and they attacked and tried to kill whoever was going by the road. And that's why they try to tie him up all the time because he was deadly and dangerous. He comes running down, and it says that he screamed this shrieking scream. He was a bizarre person, possessed by thousands of demons, charging down the hill to do his normal havoc, threatened life and limb.

Satan is a murderer, is he not, from the beginning, as well as a liar. Comes down the hill, and down he comes. The man never met Jesus, man was a Gentile living over in Gadara. Jesus never been there before and never went back. He shows up on the shore and all of a sudden out of the man, the demons scream, "Whoa! Why are You here? It's not time yet."

You know, don't you, that demons are all premillennialists because their theology's accurate. They knew He was the Son of the Most High, and they knew He was their judge, but they knew it wasn't to be at His first coming that the judgment would take place. And the demon panics, "Whoa, it's not time! Don't send us to the pit."

And to demonstrate what He had done and to show how possessed the man was, He said, "You can do what you've asked, you can go into the pigs." And there were two thousand of them that committed "sooicide." Al, you can use that one. Or did a "swine dive," whatever way, off the – you from Arkansas understand that. But why did He do that? Because He wanted to show the immensity and the absoluteness and the instantaneousness of His power over demons.

Now why am I going through all this? I'm just telling you, folks, they saw so much convincing evidence of who Jesus was, and in the end they screamed for His blood, tried to kill Him in His own town where He had done miracles. And even when in Nazareth He couldn't do anymore miracles because of their unbelief, He did them in Capernaum, which was not very far away; and they knew about all of that because they said to Him, "Why haven't You done here what You did there?" And the end of the day, no matter what He did, it was all a matter of head knowledge about the Old Testament. But their hearts were so far from God and so captive by their own self-righteousness, that they executed, through the usage of the Romans, their own Messiah. And, of course, that all fit the plan of God perfectly, didn't it. In his Pentecost sermon, Peter said, "You killed the prince of life." But it was by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God.

But the point I'm making is they had all the knowledge to know the Messiah was going to conquer Satan, and Jesus showed them that He had that power. The Messiah was going to conquer nature, He showed them He had that power. I think the greatest natural miracle Jesus did was when He stopped the storm, when He stopped the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

We hear that story, and it kind of gets trivialized, you know, because you heard it when you were a little kid and you think you understand that. Well, there's one thing that the world still can't deal with. The world still cannot deal with wind, and it cannot deal with water. The greatest havoc is still wreaked all over the world by hurricanes and floods. We have absolutely no capacity to deal with that whatsoever.

Jesus in an instant stopped a storm. Seventy mile an hour winds coming off the hills in Northern – it's part of the Sea of Galilee – whipping the lake into foam. And the disciples who lived their whole life around that sea said, "We're going to drown." So they knew what the condition was. They knew exactly what the level of storm was, which would capsize a boat and cause them all to drown. And Jesus just said, "Shh," and boom, all the wind stopped immediately, and the ripples didn't run to the shore, they flattened out and it was a glass pond.

The Messiah was going to have all that power. The Old Testament said it, Jesus did all of that to prove who He was – power over the physical world, power over the spiritual world, power over the demons, power over everything. All had knowledge, and they cried for His blood.

Jesus says, “Look, we have the knowledge. We have the information. We have the truth for salvation.” He means by that the whole story of salvation is from the Jews. It’s been given to us.

On the other hand, He says, “You worship” – beginning of verse 22 – “what you don’t know, what you don’t know.” You don’t have the knowledge, and that was really true. Because the Samaritans had been rejected by Israel – remember what I told you when the northern kingdom was taken into captivity – the Assyrians took away all but the really poor people, sort of the riff-raff, the hoi polloi, the commonest of the common. They left them there. They intermarried with various Gentile tribes and constituted a hybrid that became known as Samaritans, because that was the name of the capital city of that area, Samaria. And they then, in the mingling of that, had some vestiges of their old Jewish revelations, some vestiges of their old worship mingled in with Gentile things. And so, they had a kind of worship on Mount Gerizim, but without knowledge.

One of the things that’s interesting about Samaritan worship – and through the years I’ve done a lot of reading about it. It was extremely enthusiastic and very passionate. They reject the entire Old Testament except for the Pentateuch. They deny the books of history and the books of poetry and the books of prophecy. But they were earnest and historically almost hysterical in their worship.

And so, Jesus is saying, “Look, we’ve got the knowledge and not the heart. You’ve got the heart and not the knowledge.” This is a graphic picture, the woman would know that. You don’t know what you’re doing. You don’t know who you’re worshiping because you don’t have the full revelation of God. But you’ve got the heart and the passion and the zeal.

We know, but ours in an empty kind of hypocrisy. We have all the accurate revelation, you have all the heart. And what God wants is both. You know, I think that’s a picture that we can sort of draw out historically and bring it into our own day.

Sometimes I turn on the Christian television and I see a lot of spirit without knowledge. Don’t you? People flying around, flailing around, hopping around, jumping around, falling over. There’s a lot of enthusiasm, but not according to knowledge. It’s void of understanding.

It's mindless. It's thoughtless. In fact, they're told, "Empty your mind of all thought and just start babbling, and all of a sudden the gift will come on you."

You know, the sign that seems to mark these preachers most often, the sign supposedly of their supernatural power is when they touch people and they fall down. Nothing, nothing in the Scripture ever indicates anything about that. That only happened once in the Bible, and that was Jesus, and he knocked over the whole crowd that came to take Him prisoner in the garden, and they were all Pagans. There's nothing in the Bible about falling over in a mindless state. There's nothing in the Bible about hysterical ridiculous laughing, barking like dogs and roaring like lions. And there's nothing in the Bible about any kind of mindless hysteria.

It's fine to be passionate, it's fine to be exuberant, it's fine to be joyful. It's wonderful to be happy, to be exhilarated, to be shouting for joy to the Lord. It's wonderful to have Your Spirit lifted up, to cry tears of joy and let all your emotions flow, but always in response to the truth, never in response to mindless manipulation. A lot of heat and no light.

And on the other hand, you have the other kind, you know. You go into some churches, and they've got all the theology, and they recite the creed, and it's like a morgue. You think you're in a stone quarry. It's dead, cold. It's intellectual kind of theology. And they've got all the right kind of credal expressions, and sing the serious hymns, and go through their liturgy without any heart or passion. One writer said, "Men have worshiped with open Bibles and with the name of Christ and the Bible on their lips, while whole congregations have been held in the grip of barrenness and lifelessness and powerlessness." Or it has been weeks and months and years since hearts have been ravished with the sight of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, years since any hymn has been sung with abandonment, years since a tear has trickled down the face of a worshiper, years since a hallelujah flowed out of a bursting heart. So we are to worship in spirit and truth. That's just kind of where the text is taking us.

Let me talk about that for a minute. Let me talk about spirit, first of all. This refers, as I said, to the inner self, the real self, the human spirit. And this means it can happen anytime, doesn't have to be manipulated by anything on the outside. Doesn't need mood music. Don't

have to sing and sway and create the mood; doesn't come from that. It's not connected to mood. It's not connected to any manipulating element.

There are people who think they worship because they feel the music, they feel the mood that the music induces them into. That isn't anything to do with worship whatsoever. I don't find anywhere in the Bible where in order to get worship going, play music. It isn't about that. It is not induced from the outside, it boils over from the inside.

I don't know if my memory is good, but let me see if it is. I'm not going to tell you where I'm going until I know I'm right. Yeah, Psalm 45, it is okay. "My heart overflows with a good theme; I address my verses, my song to the King." He takes out his tongue, as it were, and says I's like the pen of a ready writer. "I'm going to praise the King. I'm going to move my tongue as if I were right. I'm going to sing a song to the King, and my heart" – he says – "overflows with a good theme. And here I go in worship."

And this is a Hebrew term there. "Overflows," is to boil over. It's to boil over. The idea is that my heart is so hot with its grasp of the truth, that it boils over in praise. That's the kind of spirit we're talking about. It isn't about a right time or place, or the right stimulation. It's about the heart.

You know, Psalm 51 is another good illustration of it. I would imagine that Psalm 51 first was David's prayer of confession. It was very private. I don't think anybody was playing anything. I don't think he was even playing his own harp. I don't think there was any music, I don't think there was anything there. He just started praying, coming off his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, this horrible sin of murder and adultery and all of that, as well as betrayal of his own family and his own wife and children. And he prays, "Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness." And he confesses his sin, "Wash me, cleanse me. I know my transgression," and he goes on. He even goes back to admit the fact that he was depraved from the womb. He was brought forth in iniquity, he was conceived in sin. He says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, deliver me from bloodguiltiness; and then my tongue" – he says in verse 14 – "will joyfully sing of Your righteousness." "I don't need any external inducement, I just need Your forgiveness."

“O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise.” Now what he’s saying is, “God, just do a work inside of me that will result in praise. Just do a mighty work in me that’s going to boil over in praise.”

In Romans 1:9, Paul says, “God is my witness” – I love this next line – “whom I worship with my spirit.” He’s writing to Gentile readers who didn’t know anything about worshipping with the spirit. They had worship that was mechanical, it was physical, it was external like all Pagan worship is. And the Jews were the same. “God is my witness whom I worship with my spirit,” Paul says.

Psalms 103, what does it say? “Blessed the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me.” How do I get to that? I tell you how I get to that, and the same way with you. It’s a boiling over when your mind grasps truth. You sit in a church, and if you are not led into the deep things of God you’re going to have a hard time experiencing real worship. You go week after week, after week, after week, and it’s shallow, shallow, shallow, repeat the same things at the same level, never takes you where you’ve never been before, never plumbs the depths of God.

As I said, the preacher has two jobs: go down and go up. And you can’t go up in transcendent praise unless you’ve gone down to the depths of profound understanding of the greatness and the wonder of God in all His fullness. If you go to a situation where you just are never taken down into the richness of the glories of God, it’s then impossible for you to really be elevated unless somehow you in your own heart and your own mind just go over the things you know. But the more your knowledge of the Word of God and the truth of God and the glory of God is expanded, and the more you wonder and are in awe about Him, the more you boil over, so that when you sing the songs of praise they literally are the overflow of your understanding of the truth.

It’s the passionate, emotional, exhilarating joy and gratitude in response to what you know about the truth. You know, people say they’re having worship, and they connect worship to certain kinds of songs in certain kinds of styles, sort of schmaltzy mood, soft sound, sweet sounding, lilting that sort of moves you emotionally. I’m not against that kind of music, but it gives people the false idea that they have worship when they’ve never really poured out their soul in songs of praise, even songs like that, because it’s literally boiling over from the grasp of the truth which has gripped their minds.

Now I'm going to say something and I hope Clayton doesn't misunderstand me. You know who the worship leader is in our church? Me. I am the worship leader. He is the worship facilitator, I am the worship leader. You say, "How do you lead in worship?" Because I take an hour to take the people down into the depths of the truths of God which gives them understanding of the truth that boils over in their praise. Is that not true, Clayton?

There isn't anybody in your church who's a worship leader except the pastor. The pastor is the worship leader. Whatever the worship is, it is in response to whatever the people are taught. And if there's not a great emphasis on teaching the Word of God, somebody may be orchestrating music and emotion to some degree, but it isn't the worship that the Word of God lays out, that which is in spirit, boiling over, because of an understanding of the truth. It all generates out of the spirit of your mind. That's Ephesians – just looking at it – Ephesians 4:23, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

People have said to me through the years, "How can you call your church service worship when you preach so long?" That's a very common question. "How can you possibly call your church service a worship service when you preach for an hour?" to which my response is, "How can you call a church service worship if you don't?" because how can people truly worship if you're not filling their minds with exhilarating truths.

In fact, sometimes I think that I should preach first, you know, and then have the worship. But I don't want to preach till everybody's there. I'm not much of a pragmatist, but I am a little bit of a pragmatist.

You know what I'm saying, right? You preach a sermon on the holiness of God. And I don't have to do it every Sunday. I don't have to say, "Okay, I have to preach first so they can worship." You just preach week after week, teach week after week, after week, after week, and you're just pouring truth into their lives. They come ready on the next Sunday to worship not based upon what I'm going to say that Sunday, but what I've been saying for years and years and years. And how, while during the week they read and study the Word of God, and they grow in the knowledge of God, they come ready to worship.

Our people – I love our people’s – the way our people sing and the way they’re – there’s a certain abandonment, as I quoted earlier, in the worship that comes from the heart. And that is the kind of worship that we want. And so, I think John Piper had it right, that the goal of the preacher/teacher is to show his people the majesty of God. And he has a statement – can’t remember the exact quote – in which he says, “People are starving for the Word of God, they just don’t know it,” because you don’t know it until you’ve tasted it. But once you’ve begun to taste it – and it isn’t because you want head knowledge, it’s because the truths are so glorious.

Just being practical as I close here, sometimes it’s this Calvinism thing comes up, and people say to me, “Doesn’t the idea that God is sovereign over everything bother you?” Bother me? That is the single most glorious reality I know of. Which would you rather have: God in charge or no one? Are you kidding me? I don’t want to live in a world where no one’s in charge. I don’t want to live in a world where you’re in charge of your life and I’m in charge of my life. I will make a mess of mine and you will make a mess of yours, and we’ll all end up in hell.

I want to live in a world where God is in charge. I want to live in a world where God comes and seeks me and finds me, and holds me and keeps me, and brings me to glory. I want to live in a world where He chose me, and He calls me, and He justifies me, and he glorifies me. I want to know I’m safe. I would make a lousy Arminian.

What am I supposed to do, hang on by my fingernails because no one’s in charge but me of my eternal destiny? Of course, that’s not what the Bible teaches. I rejoice more in the sovereignty of God than any other thing in all of the revelation of Scripture. I rest in that, that great truth. And so my worship is directly related to my knowledge of the truth.

And when I teach a message on justification, or some other great doctrine and understand the significance of what Christ has wrought for me and how God has covered me with the righteousness of Christ, and how God looks at me and sees His Son because He’s robed me in His own perfect righteousness, that’s thrilling to me. If I didn’t understand the doctrine of justification, my worship would be limited, right? If I didn’t understand what God’s prepared for those that love Him and the glory to come, my worship would be limited. If I didn’t understand that I can cast all my care on Him because He cares for me, my worship would be

limited. And the deeper and more glorious my understanding, the richer my understanding of the character of God and all the redemptive glories that are mine in Christ, the greater will be my worship.

People without that are cheated. And, look, 1 Corinthians 14, Paul says, “If somebody comes into your church and you’re all speaking in tongues, what are they going to say? They’re going to say, ‘You’re crazy. Let me out of here.’” That’s what he says. “They’re going to say, ‘You’re mad. Let me out of this place.’ But if an unbeliever” – isn’t that interesting – “if an unbeliever should come” – not that church is never designed for an unbeliever, but one might come; we hope they do – “if an unbeliever comes and you’re all listening to the Word of God and worshiping, he will fall on his face and say, ‘God is in this place.’”

What should an unbeliever experience when he walks into a church? Certainly not hysterical spirit, but a true, exuberant, joyful, thoughtful worship based upon a knowledge of God. And he falls on his face and says, “God is in this place.”

What the church lacks most is discernment, because it lacks an understanding of truth. I’m not talking about formulas, I’m not talking about creeds, although those things can articulate the truth; I’m talking about understanding the truth. I’m not talking about systems, I’m talking about the truth. And the best way to disseminate the truth to the people is one verse at a time. That’s what we do; and the truth does its mighty, mighty work.