

The Gospel and Worship

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[0 : 00] Friends, I'm so thankful that I can unpack this passage with you. Whilst I'm untangling myself, I want to add my special welcome to you.

But a particular special welcome to our Year 7-8s into our room as they continue on the journey of discovering what it looks like to be lifelong disciples and particularly as they worship with us on Sundays.

So I'm really glad that I can tie a neat bow. I try to, hopefully. To finish one Thessalonians. And if you've got a St Paul's app with you, there is an outline for notes.

But if you're a note taker, I've got them on the screen for you. These are the three points. Number one, the heart of worship. Number two, the inputs for worship. And steadfast worship.

But before we do, let's pray. Gracious Father, your kindness in Christ means that we can come before your throne with full confidence that you will deliver on your promises.

[0 : 58] And today I pray that you show us those promises evidently. The promises that your spirit is unveiling the glories of this text to see you clearly. And the promise that you are chipping away at our hearts so that we can become more like our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen. I remember a while ago I was walking with a friend of mine to Macca's. And we were determined to get a really, really good feed.

And as we were chatting, he kind of stopped me because he had received a text. And it was a text that kind of shocked him. And it was about a sad occurrence that had happened for a friend of his. And he said, let's just stop now. Let's just pray for this person. And I was like, wow, okay. Like, this is the first time I've ever gone like, okay, let's just stop in the middle of the path and just pray because my heart is convinced and convicted that it needs to get chicken nuggets.

And as we continued hanging, I just noticed him talk about how cool it was for God to be his creator. Every third sentence was like speckled with, I thank God that, or in God's kindness, by God's grace.

[2 : 11] And as I was hearing these things, like, did he just want to show that he was, you know, more holy, more overtly religious than me?

And what I'd begun to realize was that he was so convinced, so convinced that God is the true and living God, that he was confident about the presence and work of the living God, that he had to talk to him, that he had to talk about him.

This is worship. This is worship. What's your picture of worship? Is worship connected to singing songs or when we open the Bible, when we pray?

Perhaps all the things that seem uber churchy. Maybe we see that worship is only a matter of time in our calendars, a Sunday, maybe a midweek, or maybe even certain seasons.

When seasons are hard, you come to church for hope and assurance. And what I want to say is that the scriptures, particularly the passage that we're going to unpack today, is much, much greater in its depiction of worship, much greater on a grander scale.

[3 : 28] And we might have a small view of what worship is or what it even can be. And it's limited, perhaps because the way that we give devotion and adoration to God is confined by the resources that we can give him that we think are limited.

But maybe that's not the case. Maybe God joyfully says you actually have more to offer than you think. But this passage captures the essence about worship.

If last week's passage that Nick looked at was the horizontal nature of what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus until Christ returns, this speaks of the vertical nature, our devotion to God.

Paul's very first point in regard to worship is that worship is an all-of-life matter. If you've got your Bibles open, keep it at verse 16.

It says, Be joyful always. Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

[4 : 43] Notice the language. Notice that Paul uses to describe the action words with always, continually, all circumstances.

Worship is not a matter that is a start and stop. It's not a compartmentalised life where I do this, this, and worship is here.

Worship is all of life. And this might sound overwhelming to you. How am I supposed to juggle being a parent, a child, a student, an employee, a boss, do chores, find time to sleep, a member of a church, let alone be an all-of-life worshipper of Jesus?

Friends, that perhaps the question is not the what or how we do worship, but our first question ought to be the who, the object of our worship.

Whom do you worship? Friends, who or even what do you devote your time, affections, and praise to?

[6 : 01] The matter at hand isn't that maybe you need more church or more Bible. They could be, in fact, what you might need. But the reason you worship is the object.

And the object in 1 Thessalonians that he starts and begins is that we worship the true and living God who's made visible in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So do you see God for who he is? Do you see him as the creator of the universe? Two years ago, I picked up tennis, and I had played as a child for about 10 years, and I was really genuinely, I'm not trying to be humble, not good at all.

Couldn't hit a ball for the life of me. And I just noticed, as I was hitting my forehands and backhands, my coach said something to me, and he was screaming repeatedly from the other side of the net. And he said, eyes on the ball, like a million times. Because I thought I had my eyes on the ball, but what I realised was I had my eyes on the opponent, the coach, spectators, where I was trying to aim, but what I needed to have my eyes fixed on was the ball.

[7 : 20] And the three actions that Paul refers to in worship that he calls you to do all times, all circumstances is pray, rejoice, give thanks.

For the Christian, this is what the heartbeat of the person does, and it only is worship that is pleasing and true when the worship has our eyes fixed on the right thing.

Pray to God in Christ Jesus. Give thanks to God for Christ Jesus. Rejoice in the Lord.

That's where your eyes should be fixed, friends. It's because Christ is worthy of your praise. He is the only living, true God who created all things to give thanks to.

Worship is made right and perfect when our eyes are fixed with Jesus. And the rejoicing here that Paul talks about as well is not this matter of being happy.

[8 : 27] John Piper puts joy as being Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul produced by the Holy Spirit as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world.

Happiness hangs on what happens. Joy doesn't. I won my soccer game. I got a promotion. If that's not happening, I'm not happy.

But joy? Joy can be a matter of when life is frustrating. Joy can be experienced and felt in the midst of grief.

Joy can be felt when you don't know even what the Lord is doing in your life at this present moment. Think about the times that Paul himself talks about joy.

He says in 2 Corinthians 12 verse 9 on the screen, Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

[9 : 30] Romans 5, 2-3, We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings. Notice that Paul often talks about joy in times when it is hard.

If you are wanting this steadfast and ongoing joy that doesn't buckle when you are crushed and afflicted, look to Jesus.

Have your gaze firmly fixed on him. Because what we saw earlier in the chapter that Paul gets them to look forward to the day of the Lord.

For those of you who are playing at home, that is the day that Jesus will come back and bring an end to all things and renew them and restore them to how everything will be.

Because joy is confidence that he will make you all that you were meant to be in every fashion.

Physically, mentally, spiritually, existentially, on the day that Jesus returns.

[10 : 41] Because do you see it? God made you to be an awe maker. You were created to have awe at things.

And when our awe of Jesus is diminished, what we cannot do in renewing our awe, Jesus does it for us and will complete it when we are with him forever.

Revelation 19, verse 1 says, After this, I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting, Hallelujah. Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.

The end for the Christian, in fact, the end for all people, is that they worship God. What our life, the world, is hurling towards is the adoration of the one who made us and is the only one who is worthy of our praise.

And so to answer that question at the beginning, how am I meant to do all of life worship? Worship is when your life becomes more about Jesus than this world.

[11 : 57] Worship isn't just singing praise to our God, being in the Word as they are and is a pinnacle of what we are on about.

But worship is also when you willingly vacuum after Sunday kids when there is glitter all over the floor because you were convinced that the glitter was going to help them understand the Bible. It's when you sit under your boss talking about your work performance and listen humbly like Christ. When you pray for the Lord's patience not to scream at your child. It's when you keep coming to church in the hard, hard seasons or even when church is hard.

Because it's all about Jesus. For is that not what Jesus does when he is on agony on the cross? When he says, Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.

The true living God perseveres on the cross for his Father's will. He doesn't scorn at you. He doesn't sit in silence. He prays. He prays.

[13 : 12] He prays that your soul might know the depths of your sin, your inability to worship him, and that your gaze may be reattached to his heart for you. Because of Christ, you are free to worship.

You are free to worship anytime, anyplace, and you get to do what you were made for. Friends, isn't that good? Isn't it a joy that in Jesus you get to worship who you were made to worship?

I've had this question a lot from youth over the years, and it's this. No judgment. Ash, I understand. God is the creator of the heavens and the earth. Jesus died for me.

He's everything. But I just don't want to learn about Jesus today. Is that okay? Have you ever felt sometimes weary about worship?

Have you felt that what the kid is saying is what you feel sometimes?

[14 : 26] I wonder if Paul continues on reminding us that our devotion to God doesn't just start with what you put out, but what you put in. The inputs in your heart matter as much as your outputs.

Have a look at verse 19. Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

Why does Paul say this? The Thessalonian church might have been constantly hearing prophecy maybe. Maybe there was a really bad instance of prophecy. And so Paul says, don't despise it.

And what we need to say about prophecy is that often biblical prophecy, particularly in the Old Testament, was not just a future prediction, but a message from God.

It could be God's law, as he did with Moses. And perhaps Paul is calling for some discernment of what they hear. And it's worth noting briefly that prophecy is quite a divided matter between Christians today.

[15 : 34] And I don't think scripture is quite definitive of what prophecy for us today is. Particularly in this passage, Paul does not tell us what the prophecies are or why he brings the matter of prophecy in verse 19 to 22.

Some people say that prophecy today is this unprompted thought that God has suddenly brought to mind. Some people say it's the powerful preaching of the word. But I want to park the debate.

You can speak to me or you can speak to Steve. Sorry, Steve. Over about morning tea. But what I want us to listen carefully here to is the principle.

The principle is if prophecy is rooted and always rooted that it is from the word of God, it must always be tested by the scriptures.

And I think what is clear in this passage and others what Paul writes is that these prophecies are about holding what is good and what is in light, what is affirmed in scripture.

[16 : 36] In other words, the principle is that whatever you hear, does it ring out the glories, the majesty, the beauty of our great God.

So that means we can apply this principle to everything. We can apply it to our social media. Because sometimes we take matters that we hear in our phones and podcasts as gospel. You've heard it before, you know, the gospel of self-actualization, I am enough. The gospel of self-care. The gospel of health and fitness.

And I'm not saying those things aren't good things. But have you ever considered all of the things that you hear from this world, the media, your friends, whether you place them under the microscope and look them through a gospel lens?

Do we let the spirit work as we let him witness to the truth that aligns to his word? If Jesus is the most ultimate thing and the ultimate matter I am to gaze my mind on, if he is coming back, shouldn't everything I do, read and hear, fall under my understanding and worship of him?

[17:54] And I wonder if the people in our modern era, like me, despising of prophecy isn't the issue.

The thing that our brain and mind is subsumed by is the world, the internet and the media. And so friends, let us train our eyes to look towards Jesus and his word because he is worthy. The heart of worship is that you let all that you take in and all that you put out be shaped about Jesus. God wants your heart. It is his will for you in Christ Jesus.

The object of our affections in worship. The heart of worship is Christ Jesus.

[19:01] And you might say to me, it's all good and well for me to pat you on the back. Go on, brother. Go on, sister. But how do I keep going in worship until Jesus comes back?

How do I keep going? How can I be steadfast, perseverant for the next 5, 10, 20, 50 years, however long God has got me on this earth?

Take a look at verse 23. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely.

And may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Paul starts ending this chapter with what he begun this chapter with.

[20:01] The hope of the day that Jesus is coming back. Because this is what will keep them steadfast in worship. This is what they are to persevere in lifting their eyes to Jesus.

I was speaking to a parent recently who was considering how they parent their children and how they always have their eyes on equipping them as individuals beyond living in the household. So by the time that they become empty nesters, their children are able to live in a way that they can be self-sufficient and independent as adults.

Not just doing everything for them or fixing all their problems or making them happy, but equipping them for the future. They've always, they're always, always thinking about the future as they love, parent and nourish their children.

They've got their eyes on the future. And for the Christian, as you have your eyes fixed in Jesus, you have your eyes fixed on the future that Jesus has secured for you.

[21:12] For the Christian, you are always thinking about that future. If you want worship that is steadfast, don't take your eyes off the target. That is the promise that God, in Christ Jesus, works powerfully in you to complete you, to make you who you were meant to be until he returns.

And did you see that word sanctify? What does it mean? Sanctify is, sanctifying or sanctification is the process of being set apart for God, being made more like Christ Jesus, set apart for worship. And what is God sanctifying? What is he sanctifying? your whole spirit and soul and body.

Paul yearns for the church to not be those who are idle people. We saw that earlier in verse 14 last week. But what he wants is mature, sanctified, transformed Christians, lovers of Christ who are both transformed horizontally and vertically.

He wants you to be all in, full throttle, self-abandoned. And the question now is, how does God sanctify us? Paul tells us that the how is in the who will sanctify.

[22:38] Yes, Jesus is our object of worship. But he's not just our object of worship. He is also our agent of change.

Verse 24, he who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Jesus will by his Holy Spirit.

Doesn't that give anyone more reason to rejoice, more reason to pray unceasingly if he is the one that you ask and long that he will sanctify you and make him more like him.

And I wonder if you've come weary today thinking, I can't do it. maybe you've heard sermon after sermon this series about the need to be at peace and community.

Maybe you haven't even fully grasped hold of the gospel in your heart. The call to worship God with both your bodies and your work and you just sense that you are not strong enough to do more or be more.

[23 : 45] the story of the gospel finds its hope and beauty in that there is a stronger man than you. There's a stronger one than one who can defeat the giant apathy in your heart.

There's a more patient one when you are impatient at life and impatient with people around you.

There's a more faithful God when you feel so faithless. He will do it.

not just might do it someday but certainly. Paul says surely do it because he wants the

Thessalonians to have that certainty to not mistake that it will not happen but to be certain.

Friends, you can be certain that Jesus will change you. You don't have to be blooming to be growing.

You don't have to always be happy or be in a good season in your life to be growing because you and yourself in your own striving cannot grow yourself to the image of Christ Jesus without his Holy Spirit.

[24 : 59] Perhaps you are growing in Jesus because all you have done is remained in him in the hard times because he is the one changing you. Where have you seen yourself slowly but surely grow closer into the image of Christ rather than your own?

Who in this room have you seen grow slowly but surely into the image of Christ? Who will you encourage? And I can imagine as we talk about these big concepts what we can do is get all muddled as what that looks like in our day to day.

and I think it will be helpful for us to ground it in our daily reality. So take this group of flowers imagine that each flower is made up of all of the things you do in one day.

Maybe you are packing your school lunchbox for you kids doing it yourself thank you. Maybe you are driving to work through all that traffic.

maybe you are doing a load of laundry. Maybe you are going for a walk. Maybe you are reading the Bible. Maybe you are attending a community group. It is done in worship.

[26 : 20] All of these flowers is done in worship when you pray that your kid will shine like a light for Jesus as you pack their lunchbox.

it is when you are patient like our Lord when someone cuts you off. It is when you thank God that you have clothes to wear.

It is when you are in awe of your great creator as you see the trees that you walk through. It is when you walk past the other runner who is made in God's image.

It is when you see that God has been so so good to you but so so good to generation after generation and his faithful love for his people.

It is when you turn up each week to community group to be an encouraging friend that speaks the gospel. And all you do is you hold the vase up back to God and give it to him saying thanks God.

[27 : 25] Thank you that you have given me a life that was made for worship. You have given me life to live to the full and I give all this, the experiences, the thoughts, all back to you because I was made to worship.

Friends, what is in your vase? Let's pray. Lord Jesus, you are the founder and perfecter of our faith. We plead with you knowing that you are good and that you are a promise keeper.

That you might help us redeem every moment, take every thought captive so that we can lay it down at the foot of the cross and say thank you and just say you are worthy, you are worthy, you are worthy of all our praise.

holy