

THE TEACHING
LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

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 Rest: the Heart of Worship

Throughout this year's Teaching Legacy series, *Preparing to Reign with Christ*, we have discussed topics such as diligence, meekness, endurance, and how to handle testing. However, there is one more issue we must examine, because it is vital to our success and to our survival—rest. The key to true rest might surprise you, and it is the subject of this final Teaching Legacy letter for the year: *Rest: the Heart of Worship*.

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 True Worship

Although I have always realized that worship is one of the most important themes of the Bible, I wasn't always sure I had a clear grasp of the true nature of worship. But I have come to believe that true worship is very different from what is happening in many contemporary worship services. Without being critical, my experiences tell me that not much true worship is taking place.

So, in this study we want to examine 1) the steps to true worship, as well as 2) the nature of worship, and finally, 3) the fruit of true worship—which I believe is rest.

I think you and I might agree there is one

scarce commodity among Christians these days—rest. How many of us really know what it is to rest? How many of us really know what it means to worship?

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 The Connection

To deepen our understanding of the connection between worship and rest, let's take a look at Psalm 95, and then I will offer some comments on it.

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did



that day at Massah in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.” So I declared on oath in my anger, “They shall never enter into my rest.” (NIV)

It is unusual to have a psalm that ends with such a negative statement, but I believe it has a special emphasis that relates to this study.

In this passage, three actions are closely associated, yet distinct: thanksgiving, praise, and worship. Simply put, we thank God for what He does; we praise God for His greatness; we worship God because He is holy. Worship relates us to God in His holiness.

Of all the attributes of God, the hardest for the human mind to understand is holiness. Why? Because it has no parallel on earth. We can talk about the wisdom of God, the greatness of God, and the power of God, because we know wise people, we know great people, and we see demonstrations of power. But apart from God Himself, there is no demonstration of holiness for us to see or observe. It is a quality that is unique to God. I believe worship relates us specifically to God’s holiness.

Essential Steps

Since it is hard to understand God’s holiness, it may be hard to enter into true worship. But I believe there are steps we can follow. Psalm 100 says, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.” Those are two steps of approach to God: We can come into the gates with thanksgiving, and then we can move farther into the courts with praise. But neither of those is

worship. Thanksgiving and praise are essentially utterances of our mouths.

What, then, is worship? In both the Old Testament and New, every word for “worship” describes an attitude. It is very important to understand this point: worship is primarily an attitude. There are specific postures in Scripture associated with worship—bowing the head, bowing down the upper part of the body and, in particular, extending the arms with hands reaching upwards.

There is one other posture spoken of many times in Scripture: falling on our faces before the Lord. Most of the key persons of the Bible, at one time or another, were on their faces before God.

Isaiah 6 describes a vision of heaven and the glorious, fiery creatures called “seraphim” who worship at the throne of God. Each of them has six wings in three pairs. What has always impressed me is what they do with their wings. With two they cover their faces; with two they cover their feet; and with two they fly. I interpret covering the face and feet as worship and flying as service.

Please notice the order and the proportions. First of all, worship comes before service (they cover their faces and feet before they fly). Out of six wings, four are used for worship and only two for service. I believe that is a correct proportion. We can safely presume that worship is twice as important as service.

The Pattern

In Psalm 95, I believe there is a pattern for entering into worship. The first two verses speak of exuberant praise and thanksgiving.

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, let us

shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

I believe it is hard for God to accept half-hearted praise. These verses definitely give ample room for loud, vocal, excited, exuberant praise!

Verses 3–5 give us reasons why we should praise God:

For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

As we look at the whole created universe, we witness the wisdom and the greatness of the Creator. That recognition should elicit a response of thanksgiving and praise from us.

Two Reasons We Worship

Having approached the Lord by these steps of thanksgiving and praise, we still haven't arrived at worship. But in verses 6–7, the mood of Psalm 95 changes—we get to the heart of the matter.

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

Then in verse 7, we are given two reasons why we should worship the Lord.

For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

The first reason to worship God is because He is God, and He is our God. He is the only Being in the universe actually worthy of worship. Worship is the most distinctive way we have to relate to God as God.

The second reason to worship God is that we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care. Worship is the appropriate response to God's care for us.

A Solemn Warning

It is significant that Psalm 95 doesn't end there. It ends with a solemn warning:

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah. [Then God discusses that generation.] For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways." So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter into my rest."

This sets before us two alternatives: we can choose to enter into true worship, or we can choose not to enter. In worship, we hear God's voice. By obeying what we hear, we enter into rest. The inescapable condition for entering into rest is the importance of hearing and obeying God's voice.

In Jeremiah 7:23, God says to His people:

But this is what I commanded them, saying, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God..."

That is one of the simplest statements I have ever read to describe what God requires. "Obey My voice and I will be your God." The watershed is listening or not listening to the voice of the Lord. I believe worship brings us to the place where we can hear God's voice.

I don't want to shock you, but it is not enough simply to read your Bible. In this regard, let's look at John 10:27.

"My sheep hear My voice, and [hearing My voice] . . . they follow Me." (NKJ)

Jesus said His sheep "hear His voice." You cannot

follow Jesus if you don't hear His voice. It is a good thing to read the Bible. But it is entirely possible to read the Bible without hearing the voice of the Lord. I believe worship is the appointed way to come into that attitude and relationship where we really hear God's voice.

Entering into His Rest

Finally, in hearing God's voice, we enter into His rest. I believe worship is the way to rest. Only those who really know how to worship can really enjoy rest. As I said before, rest is very rare among contemporary Christians.

Let's look now at Hebrews 4:9:

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. (NIV)

Again, the Scripture brings out the fact that because of disobedience, they failed to enter into

rest. The Scripture says, "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God." I am not talking about a legal observance of the Sabbath, but there is something we can miss if we are not careful. I believe God can do something in our hearts that will cause us to naturally keep His divine, eternal, unchanging laws.

As we conclude this study, please consider these questions: Are you making the best of your time? Do you really know what it is to rest? Are you capable of disciplining yourself to stop doing activities and tasks, even mentally?

You and I can experience something new in learning to worship and learning to rest. I believe in thanking God and praising Him out loud. But there comes a time when you and I can "put our wings" over our faces and our feet, and we can hear what God says.

"Today, if you will hear His voice; do not harden your hearts." Let's not miss out on hearing His voice, responding in worship, and entering into His rest.



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For further study, we are making the CD "Appropriate Response: Worship" available to you at no charge. Just use the enclosed reply slip to request your copy.

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