

Worship – Recognizing the Lord is the True and Living God

1 Thessalonians 1:9 (NKJV)

⁹For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

- *Our lives changed the moment we recognized and encountered God as the true and living God.*
- *The reality of the Lord Jesus Christ is what made all the difference from being in darkness to becoming children of light and filled with hope.*

Psalm 42:1–2 (NKJV)

¹As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.

²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

- *The psalmist yearns for “the living God” as a deer thirsts for a drink of cool, bubbling water on a hot, dry day.*
- *“When shall I come and appear before God?” – One of the great privileges we have as Christians is to be able to experience God at any time by simply opening our hearts to Him in worship.*

1 Samuel 17:26 (NKJV)

²⁶Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, “What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

- *When Saul’s armies were confronted by the arrogant challenge of the giant Goliath they shook with fear, but David’s response was “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”*
- *Why was David’s response to this challenge so different than the rest of Israel’s?*
- *Even though all of Israel were God’s people, most had not come to a place of knowing the God of Israel in an intimate way.*
- *David had spent many years as a shepherd boy tending sheep. During his times of solitude he became a worshiper of God and he experienced the Lord’s protection and deliverance numerous times.*
- *The key phrase in David’s response was “the living God.”*

- *David not only believed in the God of Israel, but he knew in the depths of his heart the reality of God.*
- *Through prayer, worship, and meditating on God's Word, David was a man who knew God was real and he knew how to enjoy unbroken fellowship with Him.*
- *The two periods in David's life where the glory of God was most evident and his relationship with God was the sweetest was when he was a simple shepherd boy tending sheep, and during the years he lived in the wilderness when King Saul was threatening his life.*
- *After David began to receive the blessings of God as king of Israel, for a time he became careless about cultivating his relationship with God.*
- *Many things distracted King David—possibly even the pride of being king may have tainted him.*
- *David, the worshipper of God, began to slip and the hallmark of his life, "knowing the living God" began to fade.*
- *Once David worshipped God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength. Then he slipped into the sins of adultery and murder.*
- *King David would never have faltered and become shipwrecked by sin had he maintained an attitude of worship and the awe of knowing the living God.*
- *The greatest witness to the world about the reality of Jesus Christ is by our example that we know the living God, we fully trust Him, and nothing can shake our confidence.*

Acts 20:22–25 (NKJV)

²²And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

²⁴But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

²⁵"And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

- *Paul faced a certainty that "chains and tribulation" were waiting for him in Jerusalem, because the Holy Spirit had told him numerous times.*
- *Paul even knew that many of those with him "would see his face no more."*

- *“but none of these things move me” - Paul’s response exemplifies that he knew the living God in an intimate way with continual unbroken fellowship.*

What a wonderful expression on Paul’s part where not only was He fully confident in the reality of God but he was confident in God’s faithfulness and the perfection of His plans.

Daniel 6:20 (NKJV)

²⁰And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

- *The words of King Darius as he forlornly called out to Daniel who had spent the night in the lions’ den signified two things:*
- *“Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually” – Daniel’s life and devotion to God was evident to all around him that God was real.*
- *“able to deliver you from the lions?” – King Darius was not certain that Daniel’s faith in the “living God” would not lead to a great disappointment with a disastrous conclusion!*

Daniel 6:26 (NKJV)

²⁶I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion shall endure to the end.

- *The ultimate result of Daniel’s relationship with the living God and the supernatural deliverance he experienced, was that the king not only came to faith in the God of Israel, but he decreed that all his kingdom must worship God.*

John 6:66–69 (NKJV)

⁶⁶From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

⁶⁷Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”

⁶⁸But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

⁶⁹Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

- *There was a time when “many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”*

- *There are times in our lives when we won't understand what is happening and we can't make sense of why God is allowing certain things in our lives to happen. It is during such times that some Believers stop walking with Jesus and turn back to their old ways and habits.*
- *Jesus then turned to the twelve with the question, "Do you also want to go away?"*
- *Jesus' question indicates that what God is really looking from us as His disciples is not half-hearted followers, but those who fully trust Him even in the midst of uncertainty.*
- *Peter's response reveals two characteristics that will enable us to develop faithfulness:*
- *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." – Only in Christ is there life and purpose. Everything else ends in a dead-end and disappointment.*
- *"we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." – We need to believe and know with our entire being that Jesus is the Son of the living God.*
- *In the story of Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal, we see the relationship between true worship and knowing the Lord as the living God.*

1 Kings 18:19-40 (NKJV)

19 Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

20 So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel.

21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

- *Elijah challenged Israel to make up their mind about who God is.*
- *"How long will you falter between two opinions? – The Hebrew word for "falter" means "to pass over" or "to limp."*
- *Israel could not make up its mind who they were going to serve, God or Baal.*
- *Elijah's name means "The Lord is God."*

- *The question that Elijah posed was, “If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”*
- *The Lord is asking each one of His children to answer the question: “Who is God and who are you going to trust?”*
- *“But the people answered him not a word” – Their response to Elijah’s question is very telling. They did not want to make any commitment either to reject God or reject Baal.*
- *A double minded person is unstable in all his ways.*

1 Kings 18

22 Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

23 Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it.

24 Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” So all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.”

- *Elijah’s challenge was for the people to decide which God is real, the Lord or Baal.*
- *The answer will be easy – The one who answers by fire, He is God.*
- *So all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.”*

1 Kings 18

25 Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.”

26 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

- *Elijah gave the worshippers of Baal the first chance to have their god answer by fire.*
- *Elijah was not the least bit superstitious.*
- *Elijah did not have to bind the demons. Instead, he proclaimed his confidence in the Lord who is the living God.*

1 Kings 18

27 And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.”

28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.

29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.

- *Elijah was in no way intimidated by being outnumbered, or by their rituals, or by their fervency in prayer, or their false prophecies.*

1 Kings 18

30 Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me.” So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, “Israel shall be your name.”

32 Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed.

- *Elijah says, “Come near to me.” - This was a very touching encounter between God and His people, Israel.*
- *So all the people came near to Elijah. – God was gathering all His people together.*
- *As Elijah was repairing the altar that has been broken down, he was showing the people how they had disregarded and neglected the Lord who had lovingly delivered them so many times from their enemies.*
- *The rebuilding of the altar evoked memories of God’s loving covenant with Israel as Elijah placed twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel.*

1 Kings 18

33 And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, “Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.”

34 Then he said, “Do it a second time,” and they did it a second time; and he said, “Do it a third time,” and they did it a third time.

35 So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.

- *Elijah carefully and meticulously cut the bull in pieces and laid the sacrifice on the altar.*
- *Elijah had them fill the altar with water until it overflowed.*

- *There were twelve water pots of water poured out on the sacrifice, the altar, and even into the trench representing the resistance of the twelve tribes of Israel to the power of God (the fire) being manifest in their midst.*
- *It is in the place of impossibility of the circumstance of a water drenched altar that God's faithfulness and power becomes evident.*

1 Kings 18

36 And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word.

37 Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again."

- *Elijah's prayer is punctuated by simplicity and confidence.*
- *Elijah's one prayer shook a nation and exposed the falsehood of Baal worship.*
- *Elijah knew the living God and his actions proved it.*

1 Kings 18

38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"

40 And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.

- *The fire did much more than just consume the offering. It consumed the wood, the water, the stones—even the dust!*
- *Imagine the sight, where once an altar of stones containing a sacrifice overflowing with water stood, not even dust remained.*
- *Absolutely nothing remained and the truth about God is revealed – He is a consuming fire!*
- *Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"*
- *This is what real worship looks like—when we are no longer double minded and the reality of God touches us.*

- And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!” So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.
- *The result of true worship is freedom from compromise and the ability to be fully obedient.*
- *From this example in 1 Kings 18 we see a strong relationship between God’s glory and worship.*
- *We also see a strong relationship between glory and opinion.*
- And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word.
- *When the glory fell their opinion of God changed.*
- *The Greek word for glory “doxa” has the meaning “view, opinion, estimate.”*
- *When we have a low opinion of God our worship is flat and our ability to obey is weak.*
- *As our opinion of God increases, our worship is more powerful.*
- *As we spend time in worship, our opinion of God increases.*
- *Which comes first?*
- *God’s intervention.*
- *The Christian life is not so much about faith as it is about choices.*
- *Are our choices based on God’s Word?*
- *It is about how we respond to the faith that God gives us that will determine if our faith will grow.*
- *Even though Israel experienced a powerful event that initially led to their hearts being turned to God it did not last. They did not continue to live a life filled with worship, so the impact of their experience with God faded away.*
- *If we neglect worship we will fail to grow in our relationship with God and we will be depriving ourselves of one of the great joys of knowing God.*

- *The Discipline of Worship*
- *Four areas we can worship God:*
 - *For His Name*
 - *For His Character*
 - *For His Attributes.*
 - *For His Word*
- *We worship God for His Names*
- *This brings our worship into a deep personal level.*

Psalm 29:2 (NKJV)

2 Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

- *There is something that is so personal and touching when we call someone by their name.*
- *We worship God for His character.*

Psalm 5:7 (NKJV)

7 But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.

- *Through worship we fall in love with Him more and more as we understand His character of love, mercy, compassion and righteousness to name only a few.*
- *We Worship God for His attributes.*

Psalm 95:6 (NKJV)

6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

- *His sovereignty, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, etc.*
- *We worship God for His Word.*

Psalm 138:2 (NKJV)

²I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- *When we worship God for His Name it develops intimacy. – love*
- *When we worship God for His Character it develops appreciation. - joy*
- *When we worship God for His Attributes it develops awe. – peace – (security)*
- *When we worship God for His Word it develops faith.*