

# Words

ARE COMMUNICATION'S MEDIUM OF EXCHANGE. WHETHER WRITTEN

or spoken, words are the means by which we share ideas, express our deepest thoughts, and distribute news. It is with words that we either exalt or tear down one another; it is with words that we curse men and praise our God—

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. James 3:9-10

—and it is with words that we misrepresent ourselves before the Lord.

Words mean little by themselves; their true currency are the ideas and emotions they represent. Like a nation's printed currency without anything tangible to back it up, when we lose the connection between the words and their true meaning, our words lose all their value.

Every group has its vernacular, and the church is no exception. Listen to the prayer of a brand new saint, then compare it to the prayer of someone who has been in the family for decades, and in the latter you will often hear the standard lingo.

There is nothing particularly wrong about having a common language among believers. Nuclear physicists and auto mechanics have theirs; Christians have theirs. Having a common language lets us, among other things, communicate in shorthand: Say the word "evangelism" to a believer and chances are good that the correct image will form in his or her mind.

It is the foundation of Christ—His blood atonement on our behalf, and the



# HERO

resultant indwelling of the Spirit—that binds us together as believers. After that, however, it is our common language that makes us into a community.

### The Elusive Hero

When common words become *too* common they lose the rich and profound imagery that they are supposed to represent. There is an inevitable downhill slide when words begin to lose their meaning: Words without meaning are, at best, a sign of ignorance; they are, at worst, a sign of gross hypocrisy.

**“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”** Matthew 6:5

We see this taking place in society at large. Take, for example, the word “hero.” This word’s real meaning describes someone of uncommon valor, who places his own life on the line for the lives of others. But society today is so starved for acts of true heroism that we rush to apply the word to people without requiring any action on their part to deserve the label. Now it is only necessary for someone to simply do the right thing for them to be hailed a “hero.” We’ve even extended the label to describe people who have done very

stupid, self-centered things, but then publicly confessed. Their confession alone, apparently, has made them a hero, while at the same time we have become bored with the true heroism that surrounds us every day—the heroism exhibited by people like police officers, fire fighters and soldiers.

### Integrity

We are enjoined throughout Scripture to be people of sincerity and integrity.

**How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!** Psalm 32:2

**I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.** 2 Corinthians 8:8

**Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.** 1 John 3:18

If sincerity is important when we speak with other people, then it is that much more important when speaking with our God.

There are many words we employ on a regular basis, words in the Christian vernacular that were once sharp and accurate, but have now had all their edges worn off by misuse and too-casual regard. We like to shrug our shoulders at such things; after all, where’s the harm?

What does it really matter?

But when we use words without understanding or caring what they mean; when the words we use in worship become little more than the mouthings of empty traditions, passed down over time until all meaning has been lost; when we repeat words of praise that once meant something in our heart, but now, because of the many built-up layers of callus, mean nothing at all—when we have such disregard for what we say, we are being dishonest. When we say something we don’t mean—and there’s no way around this—we are lying to God.

FOR NEITHER MAN NOR ANGEL CAN DISCERN HYPOCRISY, THE ONLY EVIL THAT WALKS INVISIBLE, EXCEPT TO GOD ALONE.  
(JOHN MILTON)

**“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”** Matthew 23:27-28

## Harry Truman

COURTED BESS WALLACE FOR NINE YEARS BEFORE THEY MARRIED ON A HOT AND MUGGY SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 1919.

After graduating high school Truman took a position in Kansas City, Missouri. Two years later, because he was needed at home, Harry left a promising and lucrative position at the Union National Bank, to move back to the family farm just outside the town of Grandview. Times were hard for the Trumans, and all hands were needed if the farm were to survive. The year was 1906.

Four years later the 26-year-old Truman fell head over heels for Bess. They were not strangers, but had grown up and gone to school together in

Independence, Missouri. Upon graduation, however, they had gone their separate ways.

It was sixteen miles—four or more hours round trip by horse and buggy—between the Truman farm in Grandview and the Wallace house on North Delaware Street in Independence. Harry made the trip at every opportunity to visit Bess, sometimes sleeping over, on the sofa, at his cousins’ house just across the street.

Over the coming years he would pour out his heart to Bessie in hundreds of

letters—not love letters (no “nonsense or bosh”)—but, sitting in the parlor writing after dawn-to-dusk work in the fields, he would share his thoughts, his aspirations, his life out on the farm.

The first time Harry worked up the courage to propose (in a letter) Bess turned him down. But he continued courting her with unwavering determination. Even after Bess finally said yes, in November, 1913, because of his responsibilities with the family and the farm (especially after his father died in 1914) Harry and Bess did not marry.

Then, at the age of thirty-three in the spring of 1917, Truman enlisted to serve with the U.S. Army in the war in Europe.

BESS WALLACE'S RESPONSE TO HIS DECISION WAS TO SAY THEY SHOULD BE MARRIED AT ONCE. HARRY, ALMOST UNIMAGINABLY, SAID NO. SHE MUST NOT TIE HERSELF TO A MAN WHO COULD COME HOME A CRIPPLE OR NOT AT ALL, HE SAID. THEY WOULD WAIT UNTIL HE CAME HOME WHOLE. (*TRUMAN*, BY DAVID McCULLOUGH [SIMON & SCHUSTER, 1993].)

All the while he was serving in Europe, Captain Harry S. Truman remained true to his girl back home, and shortly after he returned, they were, at last, married.

### Shallow Devotion

It is almost impossible to read of such determined devotion of a man for a woman and not contrast it with the manners and convoluted mores of this present age. Today the idea of a man so doggedly courting, for so long a time, a woman so lukewarm to his ardor, seems hopelessly archaic. Today the very idea of a man and woman dating for nine years, and remaining chaste the entire time, is almost laughable. Today either one—either the man or the woman—would have long since moved on to someone more receptive to their “needs.”

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led

astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. 2 Corinthians 11:2-4

Sadly, the devotion Christians show to their Lord bears a closer resemblance

*Living for Jesus a life that is true,  
Striving to please Him in all that I do;  
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,  
This is the pathway of blessing for me.*

*Living for Jesus who died in my place,  
Bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace;  
Such love constrains me to answer His call,  
Follow His leading and give Him my all.*

*Living for Jesus wherever I am,  
Doing each duty in His holy name;  
Willing to suffer affliction and loss,  
Deeming each trial a part of my cross.*

heaven, shouting curses at our God. We're much more subtle than that. Our lack of devotion is never so outwardly apparent—and that's part of the problem.

We exhibit a well-practiced devotion in our behavior, but it is inside, in the darker recesses of mind and heart, that we betray our true feelings.

*Living for Jesus through earth's little while,  
My dearest treasure, the light of His smile;  
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,  
Bringing the weary to find rest in Him.*

*O Jesus, Lord and Saviour,  
I give myself to Thee,  
For Thou, in Thy atonement,  
Didst give Thyself for me;  
I own no other Master,  
My heart shall be Thy throne;  
My life I give, henceforth to live,  
O Christ, for Thee alone.*

(Thomas O. Chisholm)

to the dating habits of today, than the courtship practiced just after the turn of the century. We too easily take our affections elsewhere. When things don't go our way, when disappointment and momentary disillusionment creep into our lives, when God tells us to do something we imagine might be in any way unpleasant, we begin making sidelong glances away from what should be the sole object of our affections.

That's not to say that every other week we're off searching for the benefits of Buddhism or Islam over Christianity; that's not to say that at a moment's notice we begin shaking our fist toward

Our fragile devotion is demonstrated, for example, by how quick we are to question the validity of God's precepts in His word. Surely, we think, this can't apply to *me*. This can't be what God *really* means. But He does, and when we are so quick to disregard His word, we betray the shallowness of our devotion.

Harry Truman resolved that Bess Wallace was the woman for him. He loved her—deeply, passionately—and was not in any way dissuaded from his devotion to her.

May we all be just so devoted to our Lord.

**God** HAS MADE IT SO MUCH EASIER FOR US, THAT WE ARE DETERMINED TO PUSH THE PRIVILEGE OF EASE TO AN UNSEEMLY DEGREE.

Where sacrifice originally involved the physical and bloody death of a living thing, the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ has removed that requirement. So we have taken that to mean that our responsibility for sacrifice of *any* kind has ended. The word “sacrifice,” however, as well as the profound depth of its meaning, have not changed.

SEE THE DEFICIENCY OF THE LEGAL SACRIFICES FOR SIN; THEY WERE THEREFORE OFTEN REPEATED, NOT ONLY EVERY YEAR, BUT EVERY FEAST, EVERY DAY OF THE FEAST, BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT MAKE THE COMERS THEREUNTO PERFECT (HEBREWS 10:1,3). SEE THE NECESSITY OF OUR FREQUENTLY REPEATING THE SAME RELIGIOUS EXERCISES. THOUGH THE SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT IS OFFERED ONCE

FOR ALL, YET THE SACRIFICES OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, THAT OF A BROKEN HEART, THOSE SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES WHICH ARE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST JESUS, MUST BE EVERY DAY OFFERED. (MATTHEW HENRY)

If, after Christ, the concept of sacrifice no longer requires that something literally die, it at least requires that

something be *transferred*; something must change hands. Without that, nothing has been sacrificed.

Would it be enough only to say that we have brought our tithe? No, we must have actually given it to the Lord. The idea of sacrifice throughout Scripture involved taking something of value that belonged to you and giving it to the Lord. If the thing being given was second best, God rejected the sacrifice. If the giver actually *lied* about what was being sacrificed, the result was very often more dramatic.

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? You have not lied to men but to God." And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well." And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Acts 5:1-3, 4b-10

It should be a point of thanksgiving for all of us that God no longer deals with our dishonesty in such a manner.

### A Better Way

There are a number of ways we can sacrifice to the Lord.

**Financial.** The New Testament concept of giving is more extravagant—and more voluntary—than the Old. Where the Old Testament law designated a specific amount

(10%, plus freewill offerings) to be given, under grace the amount given is determined more by the condition of the giver's heart. And if the condition of our heart is based on the sacrifice Christ made for us, then our giving will indeed be extravagant.

Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Sacrifice goes beyond the tithe or freewill offering; it goes beyond anything expected. When you give sacrificially, you give an amount based on how the Spirit leads, rather than how much you think you can afford. Giving sacrificially means that you will go without something because you gave.

**Time.** Our present culture does not encourage people to do things that are inconvenient; the glorification of self precludes doing anything for someone else that might be a bother. When we agree to do something for someone else only when it is convenient—make a casserole for the funeral dinner, help on a Saturday afternoon with the church landscaping, visit shut-ins, bake cookies for VBS—it is for naught in God's eyes.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. Romans 12:1-3

The expenditure of our time becomes a true sacrifice, however, when it is inconvenient—when we have to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for dinner, because we've made the casserole for someone else; when we'd rather be parked in our easy chair in front of the game, but work at the church instead; when we give up our bowling night to visit those who are lonely; and when we pass up a movie to stay at home and bake cookies for the children's Bible School.

**Verbal.** If it is true that every sacrifice must involve a transferral, then what is it that changes hands when we sacrifice with words?

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. Hebrews 13:15

It is difficult for many people to think three-dimensionally, to fashion ideas and concepts as objects in the mind. But, in a manner of speaking, this is what is called for when we offer up a "sacrifice of praise." Praise that begins and ends at the lips counts for very little. The words spoken must faithfully represent the condition of the heart. When they do not, the sacrifice is a lie; when they do, the words become a fragrant aroma pleasing to the Lord.

*Savior, Thy dying love, Thou gavest me,  
Nor should I aught withhold, dear Lord, from Thee:  
In love my soul would bow, my heart fulfill its vow,  
Some off'ring bring Thee now, something for Thee.*

*At the blest mercy seat, pleading for me,  
My feeble faith looks up, Jesus, to Thee:  
Help me the cross to bear, Thy wondrous love declare,  
Some song to raise, or pray'r, something for Thee.*

*Give me a faithful heart, likeness to Thee,  
That each departing day henceforth may see  
Some work of love begun, Some deed of kindness done,  
Some wand'er sought and won, something for Thee.*

*All that I am and have, Thy gifts so free,  
In joy, in grief, thro' life, dear Lord, for Thee!  
And when Thy face I see, my ransom'd soul shall be,  
Thro' all eternity, something for Thee.*

(Sylvanus D. Phelps)

# WORSHIP

THERE IS NO PLACE IN ALL CHRISTENDOM WHERE WORDS HAVE BECOME SO CHEAPENED AS IN OUR WE WORSHIP AN INVISIBLE GOD; WE SERVE AN INVISIBLE SAVIOR; WE ARE COUNSELED AND COMFORTED BY AN INVISIBLE HOLY SPIRIT.

Our God is not a physical person who lives next door, to whom we can bring a physical offering to place at His feet. Neither is He an embodied statue, before whom we can place our offerings of food or flowers. God is Spirit.

Because He is invisible, so too are many of our offerings to God. Our worship and praise take forms intangible. We cannot fashion our praise into a pretty lump of clay, paint it and fire it, then hold it up before the altar and say “Here—here is my praise!” We use words, instead of clay.

If the words themselves were the praise, then it would be enough to speak them. It would not be necessary to do anything more than simply say the words. But praise does not consist of the words alone; they are only the means by which the real praise is delivered. Real praise begins in the heart and is only transported to lofty realms on the chariots of our words.

## One Object

The beginning point for honest worship is to remove all of “self” from the moment.

WHEN YOU TRY TO FOCUS YOUR SPIRIT ON WORSHIP, THERE WILL BE ONE MAJOR HINDRANCE—SELF. WHEN YOU GET IN FRONT OF GOD, YOUR WORSHIP WILL BE HINDERED. YOU SEE, WE OFTEN HAVE THINGS THAT WE WANT TO DO TO FULFILL OUR OWN DESIRES, SO WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR DISCOVERY, OR PRAYER, OR MEDITATION, OR WORSHIP. AND IT'S HARD TO HAVE AN UNDIVIDED HEART BECAUSE WE'RE ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT OUR PROJECTS OR OUR ACTIVITIES, OR OUR NEEDS. SELF ALWAYS GETS IN THE WAY OF WORSHIP. AND WE CAN'T REALLY BE FREE TO WORSHIP GOD UNTIL WE ELIMINATE SELF ALTOGETHER AND BECOME LOST IN WORSHIPPING GOD. (JOHN MACARTHUR, JR.)

Worship, by definition, places God before everything else. An expert on the Jewish Law once asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in

the Law?” Jesus’ answer was direct and simple: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” (Matthew 22:36-38)

There are many things important in the Christian life. Evangelism is important. Koinonia fellowship is important. The preaching of the word, study, intercessory prayer are all important things we are called to do. But Jesus said that there is one thing we are to do

reminding ourselves. Day after day we struggle through life, spending our time with activities in which it is easy to forget that God is greater than anything taking place down here. Because God knows it is easy to forget, He created worship.

**From You comes my praise in the great assembly... Psalm 22:25a**

In worship we remind ourselves that God is God, and we remember His countless attributes—among which, His

*We sing the boundless praise of  
Him who reigns on high,  
And of His glorious Son, the Lamb  
Who brought salvation nigh.  
Thine everlasting pow'r  
And majesty we sing,  
But with our songs of sov'reign grace  
We'll make heav'n's arches ring.*

*All hail! Redeemer, King,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary!  
Let ransomed sinners sing Thy name  
Thro' all eternity.  
When stand the ransomed throng  
Before the great I Am,  
This shall their endless anthem be,  
"All worthy is the Lamb!"  
(Joseph C. Macaulay)*

before anything else—indeed, none of the above are even possible without first *loving the Lord our God.*

How do we do that? How do we love an invisible God? In John 4 Jesus says that God is spirit—and we are flesh. How can we love someone so unlike us—who exists on an absolutely different plane? Our love for God is manifested in praise and worship. We love Him by telling Him we do, by singing out His goodness—by verbally proclaiming His greatness:

**I will bless the Lord at all times;  
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
My soul will make its boast in the Lord;  
The humble will hear it and rejoice.  
O magnify the Lord with me,  
And let us exalt His name together.  
Psalm 34:1-3**

In corporate worship we come together and make the presence of the Lord larger in our minds and hearts by proclaiming who He is. It's a little like

omnipotence, His grace, His wisdom, and His own love for us.

OUR TONGUE IS OUR GLORY, AND IT OUGHT TO REVEAL THE GLORY OF GOD. WHAT A BLESSED MOUTHFUL IS GOD'S PRAISE! HOW SWEET, HOW PURIFYING, HOW PERFUMING! (C.H. SPURGEON)

So worship is a time to re-connect with our God. But, as David says in Psalm 34:1, it is also a time to bless Him—which means to adore Him. As one would look deeply into the eyes of a wife, a husband, a child, or a betrothed, we look deeply into the holiness of God and cry out, “I love You!”

Some contemporary Christians get sidetracked by the difference between thanksgiving and praise or worship. Thanksgiving comes easily to a people taught to be polite and grateful. From our earliest years we are trained to say “thank you” when given something nice. So when God does something nice for

us, we are comfortable and immediate with our thank-you.

Praise, however, can be a muddier affair. How do we worship an invisible God for just *being* something we cannot see? And how do we separate our praise from our thanksgiving? Where do we begin?

We begin with three little words: “I love You.” Notice the period after the three words; notice that this is not the beginning of a longer statement, but the entirety of the statement. It is not “I love You because...” If that were the beginning of the statement, we’d be slipping back into the more familiar neighborhood of thanksgiving; a worthy enterprise, but not praise. Worship is not loving God because He has done something nice in our lives. True worship is loving God simply because He is God.

That is the beginning—and essence—of worship: “I love You.” Worship, at its most fundamental level, is nothing more or less than our telling God that we love Him because we really do.

### Worship Pictures

After we have removed “self” from our mind and heart, we must then replace it with God.

THERE SHOULD BE SOME PREPARATION OF THE HEART IN COMING TO THE WORSHIP OF GOD. CONSIDER WHO HE IS IN WHOSE NAME WE GATHER, AND SURELY WE CANNOT RUSH TOGETHER WITHOUT THOUGHT. CONSIDER WHOM WE PROFESS TO WORSHIP, AND WE SHALL NOT HURRY INTO HIS PRESENCE AS MEN RUN TO A FIRE. MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD, WAS

WARNED TO PUT OFF HIS SHOES FROM HIS FEET WHEN GOD ONLY REVEALED HIMSELF IN A BUSH. HOW SHOULD WE PREPARE OURSELVES WHEN WE COME TO HIM WHO REVEALS HIMSELF IN CHRIST JESUS, HIS DEAR SON? THERE SHOULD BE NO STUMBLING INTO THE PLACE OF WORSHIP HALF ASLEEP, NO ROAMING HERE AS IF IT WERE NO MORE THAN GOING TO A PLAYHOUSE. WE CANNOT EXPECT TO PROFIT MUCH IF WE BRING WITH US A SWARM OF IDLE THOUGHTS AND A HEART CRAMMED WITH VANITY. IF WE ARE FULL OF FOLLY, WE MAY SHUT OUT THE TRUTH OF GOD FROM OUR MINDS. (SPURGEON)

How do we do it? How do we prepare our heart and mind to honestly utter words of praise and adoration to our God?

Oh come, let us worship and bow down;  
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.  
For He is our God,  
And we are the people of His pasture,  
And the sheep of His hand. Psalm 95:6-7a nkjv

The Hebrew word translated “worship” means literally to bow down in humility. The best physical attitude for worship is on one’s knees, because this immediately puts us in proper perspective to our God: He is above us; we approach Him in humble submission. But even when it is not possible for us to worship on our knees, we can close our eyes and paint the picture of His throne in our mind. We can see, in our mind, ourselves prostrate before Him.

How do we ensure that we mean the words we say in worship? When the throne of God fills your mind, and when

you see yourself in proper attitude before it, the words of praise will most certainly be honest.

HERE IS GOOD ARGUMENT: THE MAKER SHOULD HAVE HONOUR FROM HIS WORKS, THEY SHOULD TELL FORTH HIS PRAISE; AND THUS THEY SHOULD PRAISE HIS NAME—BY WHICH HIS CHARACTER IS INTENDED. THE NAME OF JEHOVAH IS WRITTEN LEGIBLY UPON HIS WORKS, SO THAT HIS POWER, WISDOM, GOODNESS, AND OTHER ATTRIBUTES ARE THERE MADE MANIFEST TO THOUGHTFUL MEN, AND THUS HIS NAME IS PRAISED. THE HIGHEST PRAISE OF GOD IS TO DECLARE WHAT HE IS. WE CAN INVENT NOTHING WHICH WOULD MAGNIFY THE LORD: WE CAN NEVER EXTOL HIM BETTER THAN BY REPEATING HIS NAME, OR DESCRIBING HIS CHARACTER. (SPURGEON)

It is something of pristine eloquence and beauty to enter the sanctuary of the Lord—be it the sanctuary of the corporate church or the sanctuary of our heart—to kneel before Him in utter humility, and to bring honor and glory to the Father simply because He deserves it.

We are to carry no agendas to the altar—no hidden, ulterior motives. We are to enter into worship without thought of self; our petitions are to remain stuffed into our back pocket. We are to offer up our words of praise for one reason only: He deserves them. God alone is worthy of our praise and adoration. And the words we offer are to bear no weight of self; they are to describe and proclaim only His holiness and worth-ship.

Honestly.

## the wonder and glory

TOO MANY IN THE CHURCH HAVE LOST A SENSE OF GOD’S PRESENCE. TOO MANY, URGED TO PUT ON THE ARMOR OF GOD, HAVE ADORNED THEMSELVES INSTEAD IN THE GARB OF THIS WORLD, THUS ACQUIRING LAYERS OF INSULATION THAT SMOTHER THEIR AFFECTIONS FOR THE LORD.

Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was

burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said, “Do

not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Exodus 3:1-6

VOCABULARIES ARE FORMED BY MANY MINDS OVER LONG PERIODS AND ARE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING WHATEVER THE MIND IS CAPABLE OF ENTERTAINING. BUT WHEN THE HEART, ON ITS KNEES, MOVES INTO THE AWESOME PRESENCE AND HEARS WITH FEAR AND WONDER THINGS NOT LAWFUL TO UTTER, THEN THE MIND FALLS FLAT, AND WORDS, PREVIOUSLY ITS FAITHFUL SERVANTS, BECOME WEAK AND INCAPABLE OF TELLING WHAT THE HEART HEARS AND SEES. IN THAT AWFUL MOMENT THE WORSHIPPER CAN ONLY CRY 'OH!' AND THAT SIMPLE EXCLAMATION BECOMES MORE ELOQUENT THAN LEARNED SPEECH AND, I HAVE NO DOUBT, IS DEARER TO GOD THAN ANY ORATORY.

WE CHRISTIANS SHOULD WATCH LEST WE LOSE THE 'OH!' FROM OUR HEARTS. THERE IS REAL DANGER THESE DAYS THAT WE SHALL FALL VICTIMS TO THE PROPHETS OF POISE AND THE PURVEYORS OF TRANQUILITY, AND OUR CHRISTIANITY BE REDUCED TO A MERE EVANGELICAL HUMANISM THAT IS NEVER DISTURBED ABOUT ANYTHING NOR OVERCOME BY ANY "TRANCES OF THOUGHT AND MOUNTINGS OF THE MIND." WHEN WE BECOME TOO GLIB IN PRAYER WE ARE MOST CERTAINLY TALKING TO OURSELVES. (A. W. TOZER)

I have never been in a church in which there were not people just going through the motions—men and women who had been redeemed for so long that the whole process had become simply old hat for them. They had lost the "Oh!"

God is too awesome for us to take Him for granted. He has not and does not change, so He commands just as much awe and respect now as He did centuries ago.

**In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said,**

**"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."**

**And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said,**

**"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:1-5**

It is true that our moments in God's presence are no longer filled with the fire and smoke of these manifestations. It is true that through the blood of Christ we now have a different, more intimate, relationship with God the Father. But He is still holy, and we do Him an injustice when we are too casual about His breathtaking presence. While we may not need to approach Him trembling with fright, we nonetheless need to approach Him with honor, and respectful fear. He is our God.

When you approach your God, do so humbly, forthrightly. When you open your mouth to speak to Him, do so honestly, without guile, a secret agenda, or distraction. When you listen for His voice, do so intently.

When you sing His praises, mean it. When you lift up holy hands, do so as a child reaching toward a loving Father. When you worship God, remove everything but Him from your attention.

It is an honored privilege we have, coming before the God of the universe without fear of death; treat it as a privilege—one to be cherished, and used with joy.

Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few. For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words.

When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God. Ecclesiastes. 5:1-7

*O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the works Thy hands have made,  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy pow'r thro'out the universe displayed.*

*When thro' the woods and forest glades I wander  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze.*

*And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in,  
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin.*

*When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,  
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art.*

*Refrain  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!  
(Stuart K. Hine)*



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