

# Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL



© *Worship the King!*

We cannot grasp the true meaning of holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. God's holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because He is holy, His attributes are holy; that is, whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy.

*A. W. Tozer*

*Why do we worship God?  
Why are we to worship Him?*

**L**et us, for the moment, set aside obedience and love, two fundamental reasons that unquestionably energize each other. We obey God because we love Him; our love for Him increases as we obey Him. These are essential. God, through His word, commands His people to worship Him.

Exalt the Lord our God  
And worship at His footstool;  
Holy is He.

*Psalm 99:5*

And our love for God (because He first loved us) compels us to fall down before Him.

How lovely are Your dwelling places,  
O Lord of hosts!  
My soul longed and even yearned  
for the courts of the Lord;  
My heart and my flesh sing for joy to  
the living God.

*Psalm 84:1-2*

But let us consider a third reason for our worship: perspective. No matter where we are, no matter who we are around, our current circumstances inevitably become to us the standard for normal. Given time, we grow accustomed to everything and everybody around us. Concomitantly, given time, that which we are

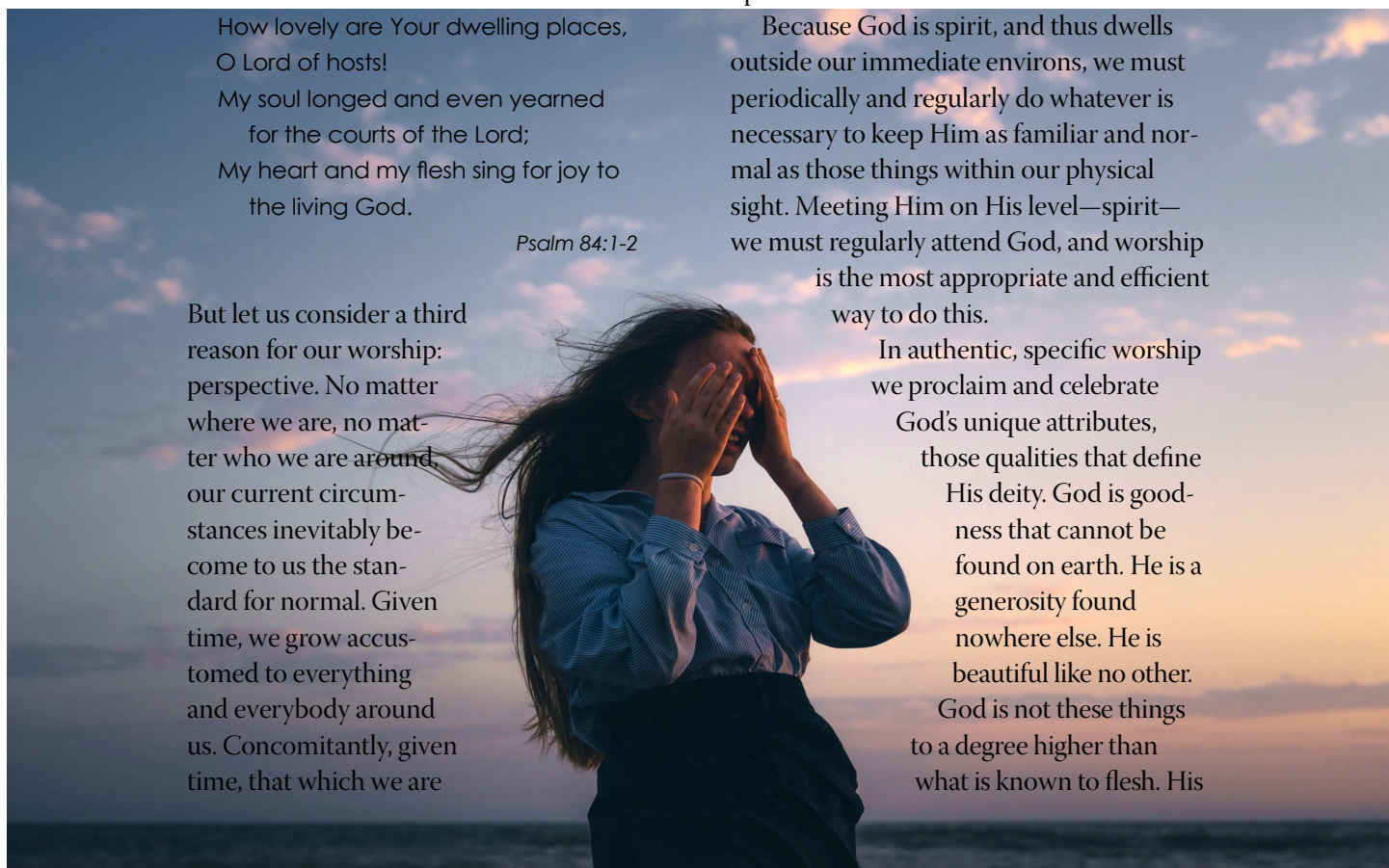
*not* regularly around becomes abnormal, foreign.

So when, day after day, year after year, our immediate environs consist of the people and things of this temporal world, the things of God—and God Himself—will inevitably become foreign to us. Our standard of goodness becomes the good of this world. Our standard of generosity becomes the generous of this world. Our standard of beauty becomes the beautiful of this world.

Because even believers remain flesh, and thus tied to the things of flesh, it is necessary for us to nurture with purposeful intent the things outside flesh: things of the Spirit.

Because God is spirit, and thus dwells outside our immediate environs, we must periodically and regularly do whatever is necessary to keep Him as familiar and normal as those things within our physical sight. Meeting Him on His level—spirit—we must regularly attend God, and worship is the most appropriate and efficient way to do this.

In authentic, specific worship we proclaim and celebrate God's unique attributes, those qualities that define His deity. God is goodness that cannot be found on earth. He is a generosity found nowhere else. He is beautiful like no other. God is not these things to a degree higher than what is known to flesh. His





attributes lie in the realm of the other-worldly. God is not a superior man. God is not better than us by degree.

So when we worship God by ascribing to Him His unique attributes we gain perspective on not just who He is, but on who we are, as well as those familiar things and people in our immediate sight. Our old car

seems just fine, until we compare it to one that is brand new. The things of earth seem just fine, until we compare them to the incomparable beauty of holy God. Compared to Him, we are but dust.

Time spent in worship of God realigns our thinking. It gives us a superior perspective.

His. ❧

*O worship the King, all glorious above,  
O gratefully sing His power and His love;  
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,  
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.*

**God** typically gets short shrift in this world. He is the butt of jokes and His name is a favorite exhalation or curse. He is blamed for all the tragic events that occur, but rarely credited for the good. Many think He does not exist, or think He does and hate Him, or don't care either way. Even many who claim to believe in Him and His Son treat Him as if He were an unpleasant step-parent they would just as soon ignore.

It defies logic that so many would so blithely and dangerously disregard someone so powerful.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

*Romans 1:18-19*

We might credit this behavior in the unregenerate to the pull of flesh and the absence

of the Holy Spirit, but what is our excuse within the body of Christ?

It is to our shame that we so lightly, so casually regard our glorious King, the Ancient of Days, the One who holds the universe in the palm of His hand. Fear should be a part of our relationship with Him—not fear as in fright or terror, but fear as in respect, fearing what He can and should do to us were it not for the redemption we have through His Son.

God in His triune fullness is all of everything. He is the worst and more than we can imagine in His wrath and severe judgment, and He is the best and more than we can possibly imagine in His mercy and grace. Of course “best” and “worst” are human, earthly, fallen terms; God is just who He is, and we reveal our ignorance and myopia when we assign such terminology to Him.

And this is not restricted to “the God of the Old Testament.” First, God is always the same as He was, is, and will be. “For I, Yahweh, do not change,” He declares

through the prophet Malachi. Second, though the world would have us believe there is a hard, bright line between the God of wrath and Jesus, who is love, it once again reveals its ignorance. For there will come a day—a glorious, terrible day—when the Son of Man will return in awful judgment and, yes, wrath.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He

treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.”

*Revelation 19:11-16*

In point of fact, God’s wrath is “good,” because behind it is His sublime holiness, His purity. And His grace is “good” because it reveals His tender love for His creation. Both are who He is, and it matters not whether we consider anything from Him to be “good” or “bad.” For God is always good, in everything He does. Thus He is worthy of our devotion and praise.

Our worship and praise is not to be grounded in our opinion of God’s “goodness” by earthly standards, whether His behavior has been more or less pleasing to us of late. No, it is to be grounded in who and what He is in Himself—His majesty and power, His eternal and unwavering justice.

Even in our base and fragile flesh we are to revere Him, fear Him, exalt Him, worship and adore Him. ☞



*O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,  
 Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.  
 His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,  
 And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.*

*Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?  
 It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,  
 It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,  
 And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.*

**N**o created god can hold a candle to the real God. No deity ever invented throughout man's time on this earth is as rich in personality and character, as fully realized as Yahweh. For no god capable of creating all that is by the power of his voice alone would consider, in a million years, sacrificing his own son for the welfare of his created beings, and then extend his compassion—if there were any to begin with—into their daily lives.

No. No other god in the history of man would ever do such a thing.

Just imagine the unimaginable strength and force within a God who can utter—not even shout, but simply speak—"Let there be..." and an entire universe comes into existence. Where before there was nothing, suddenly there is *everything*. This same God, however, holds the power to destroy, as well as create.

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God"... Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." And

there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

*Revelation 16:1, 17-21*

No man has yet experienced the fullness of God's wrath—nor should any man ever desire that experience. But every man and woman ever born on this earth has experienced God's grace. Part of His economy is a "common grace," portioned out to all: rain showers for dry crops, a child born healthy and strong, a nation of people granted release from a tyrant. These and more are ex-



pressions of God's grace to all, regardless their personal relationship to Him.

God reserves a special *covenantal* grace, however, for those whom He will redeem. These individuals are first saved by His grace—

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

—but then His grace is extended and compounded every day of the believer's earthly life, even into eternity.

and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

*Ephesians 2:4–7*

There is no conflict, no contradiction between the Lord God's might or wrath, and His grace and love. We can “sing His power

and His love,” we can “tell of His might and sing of His grace,” without snapping the constraints of logic. We can, in one verse, sing of His “chariots of wrath,” and in the next sing of His “bountiful care.” For our God is all of the above, and His character remains consistent throughout all earthly epochs.

When the psalmist David poses the question, “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place?” he follows it with a list of requirements that would disqualify every person ever born.

He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood  
And has not sworn deceitfully.

*Psalm 24:4*

Man could not rise into the Lord God's holy communion on his own. So God did it for him by sacrificing His own Son to atone for the sins of the world. His wrath against sin is so strong, so overwhelming, only His own grace could remove its need. ☞

*All that I was, my sin, my guilt,  
My death, was all my own;  
All that I am I owe to Thee,  
My gracious God, alone.*

Horatius Bonar

*Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail;  
Thy mercies how tender! how firm to the end!  
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend*

Robert Grant (1833)

# Dark

Dark charcoal gray clouds rose up quickly, packed together into hideous shapes more common to the churning walls of nuclear mushroom clouds, roiling black marshmallows bearing not sweetness, but destruction in their breast. The tops of the heavy oak trees began to sway side to side from the approaching wind—a beast gathering strength, coming straight out of the west.

Lightning flashes began more slowly, just soft illuminations backlighting the top edges of the trees, but then sharpened, transforming darkness into a ghostly silver. The storm front bore down upon us with all the weight of the heavens, caring nothing about anything or anyone it might find in its path.

Then the rain began. Broad splashes splattered the outside patio, then were quickly joined together into a common pool as the skies wept their liquid in dense sheets. The wind drove the rain hard against the west windows, searching out and finding the tiniest crack that would give entrance into the house.

Huddled downstairs, listening to weather reports on the radio, we heard the dripping. Following the sound, we discovered ground water running through the foundation where the buried power lines came into the house. We opened the junction box to see water dripping down through the breakers and exposed wires. I immediately shut down the mains, but realized that the exposed wires above the main

breakers were still hot. To render these harmless, I would have to go out into the storm to kill the power at the pole.

Donning my mudders and slicker, I stepped out into the tempest. Rain poured down, unrelenting. The air was alive with the booming crackle of lightning. Overhead, lightning smashed through the atmosphere, followed closely by the thunderous explosions that told me I shouldn't be where I was. The lightning was close, and could at any moment strike any one or more of the trees surrounding our house. I was directly under those trees—the wrong spot to be in a storm.

But this son of an electrician knew that live wires and water do not mix. I wanted to kill the power outside the house, not inside. I dashed across the lawn, crossed the gravel drive, heading for the pole. Silver flashes lit up the scene. A sharp crack told me that lightning had just struck something nearby; the sound was simultaneous with the flash of light. I didn't want to be where I was, felt like a sitting duck, felt as if the electrically charged atmosphere was hovering over my head, gathering steam for one last burst to strike me down on the spot. I wondered what it felt like to be struck by lightning, but figured I wouldn't know anything until I awoke in the hospital.

Maybe.

Few things in this life can better illustrate our puny existence, our frailty, against the unbounded omnipotence of God than



standing helpless and vulnerable out in a thunderstorm. It puts us in our place; it strips us of all our fleshly pride and blind self-sufficiency. As well it should, for He is God, and we are not.

Such exhibitions of His mighty power are meant to drive us to our knees—not in quaking, simpering fear, but in holy and earnest worship of the sovereign God who rules over such things.

God—that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is all in all. He is wrath, but He is

also love. He is the One who will one day cast all the unrepentant into eternal hell and damnation, yet He is also the One who gave His own life to atone for our sins. He doles out painful moments of correction, but He also pours out His mercy and grace. He chastises and He comforts.

How can we *not* fall down in reverent, adoring, joyful worship before a Lord such as He.

*O worship the King! ❖*

The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;  
The world and all it contains, You have founded  
them.  
The north and the south, You have created them;  
Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name.  
You have a strong arm;  
Your hand is mighty, Your right  
hand is exalted.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of  
Your throne;  
Lovingkindness and truth go before You.  
How blessed are the people who know the joyful  
sound!  
O Lord, they walk in the light of Your countenance.  
In Your name they rejoice all the day,  
And by Your righteousness they are exalted.  
For You are the glory of their strength,  
And by Your favor our horn is exalted.  
For our shield belongs to the Lord,  
And our king to the Holy One of Israel.

*Psalms 89: 11-18*

