

Worship & Love for Christ

Both the Old and the New Testament teach that the essence of true worship is the love of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Our Lord declared this to be the sum of the Law and the Prophets. In worship, several elements may be distinguished, among them love, admiration, wonder and adoration. Though they may not be experienced in that order, a little thought will reveal those elements as being present wherever true worship is found. Now, love is both a principle and an emotion; it is something both felt and willed. It is capable of almost infinite degrees. Love in the human heart may begin so modestly as to be hardly perceptible and go on to become a raging torrent that sweeps its possessor before it in total helplessness. Something like this must have been the experience of the apostle Paul, for he felt it necessary to explain to his critics that his apparent madness was actually the love of God ravishing his willing heart.

Worship Is Impossible Without Loving God. It is quite impossible to worship God without loving Him. Scripture and reason agree to declare this. And God is never satisfied with anything less than "all thy heart... all thy soul... all thy might." This may not at first be possible, but deeper experience with God will prepare us for it, and the inward operations of the Holy Spirit will enable us after a while to offer Him such a poured-out fullness of love. In the love which any intelligent creature feels for God there must always be a measure of mystery. It is even possible that it is almost wholly mystery, and that our attempt to find reasons is merely a rationalizing of a love already mysteriously present in the heart as a result of some secret operation of the Spirit within us, working like a miner, toiling unseen in the depths of the earth. But so far as reasons can be given, they would seem to be two: gratitude and excellence. To love God because He has been good to us is one of the most reasonable things possible. The love which arises from the consideration of His kindness to us is valid and altogether acceptable to Him. It is nevertheless a lower degree of love, being less selfless than that love which springs from an appreciation of what God is in Himself apart from His gifts. Thus the simple love which arises from gratitude, when expressed in any act or conscious utterance, is undoubtedly worship. But the quality of our worship is stepped up as we move away from the thought of what God has done for us and nearer the thought of the excellence of His holy nature. This leads us to admiration...

(Next week's insert!)

by A. W. Tozer

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