

RT Kendall: 3 Steps to Authentic Worship in the Holy Spirit

I've talked before about suspect, or counterfeit, worship. Worship that is elitist or is reduced to the level of popular entertainment, worship that is emotional or aesthetic is worship in name only. It has the external form without the reality. What we long for is living worship. But how does this come about?

I think the principle to follow is to be found in Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." That is true for all of us, whomever we are or whatever we want. But when we delight ourselves in the Lord, some of our desires may wither away and be replaced by new ambitions. So it will not do to envisage a definite goal concerning the form our worship must take. We must, first of all, be sure that we are delighting ourselves in the Lord and then see what God does.

I want to show you from Paul's words in Philippians 3:3 that worship that is "by the Spirit of God" has three stages: first, the initiation of the Spirit; second, the impulse of the Spirit, and third, the inheritance of the Spirit.

So, first, the initiation of the Spirit. We must see here that God's elect—that is, those whom God has chosen—are a people of the Spirit. Now the Jews in Paul's day said that the people of God were those who had been circumcised. To this day, one is officially a Jew if one has a Jewish mother. Being a Jew is either inherited or initiated by circumcision. Many think it is the same with Christianity. They think that to be a Christian, you must be born into a Christian home, be baptized or attend a Christian church.

Not so, says Paul. God's elect are a people of the Spirit. In Romans 9:6-7 Paul says, "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel, nor are they all children because they are descendants of Abraham, but 'In Isaac shall your descendants be called.'" Ishmael, though a son of Abraham, was regarded as strictly of the flesh, whereas Isaac was the child of promise, and he was of the Spirit.

When Paul says, "We are the circumcision," he means that God's people are circumcised in the heart. "Circumcision is of the heart" (Rom.2:29). And this is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63). And Paul said in Romans 8:2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." The only people who truly worship God are the people of the Spirit, who have had this operation of the Holy Spirit upon the foreskins of their hearts. Only the elect can worship God with spiritual worship. All others may say that they worship, but they are worshipping idols.

Our churches should not be places where the unregenerate come on Sundays because they "like the worship." Our churches ought to be places where the unregenerate feel uncomfortable because it is the Spirit who is important and who comes first. Our controlling principle must be obedience to the Spirit—no matter where He leads us.

And, further, worship that is initiated by the Spirit is always of the Spirit, and in the Spirit. Of the spirit refers to those who have been brought to the new birth; by the Spirit describes what these reborn people are able to do—they serve God under the impulse of the Spirit. And this is an internal thing, a matter of the heart. It may be expressed externally, but it is immaterial whether this be by tambourine, guitar or pipe organ.

Lastly, worship that is in the Spirit is brought about when,

under the impulse of the Spirit, God's people are taken a step further so that they begin to adore the triune God on a level that is different from anything they have ever experienced before, a level which transcends elitist or emotional or entertainment worship. And this is not something which can be worked up by hand-clapping, or forcing your hand into the air or by self-induced enthusiasm. This is done by the impulse of the Spirit (see Phil. 3:3).

We must understand that worship by the impulse of the Spirit is done by degrees. And some may experience a higher degree of this impulse than others. The principle here is that the greater the measure of the Spirit, the less we will be conscious of those around us, and the more we will become aware of God.

✖ *Adapted from Worshipping God by R.T. Kendall, copyright 2017, published by Charisma House. This book will remind you that your fundamental calling and primary duty is to worship God. It teaches you what worship truly is so that you can use it as a vehicle to honoring, loving and glorifying God. To order your copy, click on this link.*

Prayer Power for the Week of June 10, 2018

This week, continue to pray for revival to ignite in our churches and spread across the nation and around the world. Remember those who have spiritual, civic and national authority over us as commanded in Scripture. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and remember the members of our armed forces, first responders, government officials and their families. Read: Psalm 37:4, Romans 8:2, Philippians 3:3.