

# This Worship Ingredient Is Crucial to Pleasing the Spirit

Expectancy is a vital ingredient in worship. Those who come to church expecting something to happen are more likely to see God work than those who come expecting nothing. But what about when we do come expecting and nothing happens? What about when we feel that God has let us down? We say, "God, I came today, and I wanted You to speak but you didn't speak to me!" What can we say about times like these?

The same questions apply to our own quiet times with God. Maybe we've prayed every day during the week and yet have not experienced God's blessing or seen Him answer prayer. What then?

My answer is that faithfulness is, if anything, even more important than expectancy in worship: "It is required in stewards [that is, those who have been given a trust] that a man [or woman] be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). "Who can find a faithful man?" asks the writer of Proverbs (20:6). Anybody can be faithful when prayer is being answered, when the wind is at one's back and everything is going well. But what is one to do when God suddenly hides His face?

We have all experienced this. If you are a new Christian and haven't yet—you will! "Truly You are a God who hides Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior," said Isaiah (45:15).

The thing about the hiding of the face of God is that it never comes with advanced warning. And it can happen when we are not aware that we have done anything wrong. God does, of course, hide His face when we are disobeying Him—but when that happens, we understand it. What is particularly painful is when we are doing our best to walk in the light and God hides

His face.

Habakkuk 2:4 is a famous verse which is quoted three times in the New Testament: "The just shall live by his faith." In the Hebrew this reads, "The just shall live by his faithfulness."

There is an intentional ambiguity here. The faithfulness can be God's faithfulness to us or our faithfulness to God; the verse can be read either way, and it means both. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, there is a commentary on Habakkuk 2:4 and it reads, "The just shall live by God's faithfulness." This refers to living by the fact that God is faithful to His promises. It is the way that Hebrews 10:38 interprets this verse.

But it can equally describe the faithfulness of the individual himself who doesn't give up hope. The person who trusts God and lives by His promise to bless is declared righteous in the sight of God. That became one of the main verses Paul used for the doctrine of justification by faith. It applies to the future—to the fact that God will accept us in heaven—but it also applies to the present. God is saying that we are declared righteous now. What needs to be seen from this verse in Habakkuk is that, as we live by God's faithfulness, we are in each moment declared righteous.

If we could see this today, it would set us afire. If, in the moment when we don't see answered prayer, we could just look up to heaven and say, "God, I love You anyway." God would declare us righteous just because our faith pleases Him. That kind of faith has a cleansing result. We feel clean. We don't understand why God lets things happen, but we trust Him anyway.

Are you looking for the vine to blossom before you can rejoice? Are you looking for the fig tree to give figs before you can praise the Lord? Are you waiting for the raise in pay? Or for that answered prayer? Are you waiting for everything

to fit in before you start praising the Lord?

Nothing changed outwardly for Habakkuk. His circumstances remained the same, but a lot happened to him. He saw something that we all need to see: that grace will always be there to keep us one step ahead of the enemy. Things may not get better around us –but a lot can happen to us—and that changes everything. We can praise God even in the dark.

✘ *Adapted from Worshipping God by R. T. Kendall, copyright 2017, published by Charisma House, Charisma Media/Charisma House Book Group. R.T. Kendall shows us the true meaning of worship as a way of honoring, glorifying and loving God no matter our circumstances. To order your copy click on this link.*

### **Prayer Power for the Week of April 30, 2017**

This week though we, like Habakkuk, face an uncertain future in the present world system, we can look in faith to our totally faithful God and lean on His promises for our present and future hope. Thank Him for His faithfulness and continue to pray for those in authority over us as admonished in scripture. Lift up our spiritual leaders as you pray for worldwide revival. Remember our allies and those serving our nation at home and abroad. Hab. 3:17-19; Hab. 2:4; I Cor. 4:2