

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. Oct. 14th 2007

Deeper into Worship Ephesians 1:3-16, Psalm 84

The Gates of Thanks giving and Courts of Praise

Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon



The Temple : place of worship of God for the Jewish People and a model for worship and prayer for Christians. First Temple built mid 900's BC by Solomon and consisted of gates in to concentric courtyards which led the worshipper to the Holy place and then to the Holy of Holies. God had come to inhabit this particular places which contained the Ark of the covenant . It was at this central point in the temple that atone for sin was made by the High Priest. As Solomon said in his prayer 'God does not live in houses built by men'. However, since Creation we see that God wanted to 'dwell' with his people, and so until Jesus came he confined himself to the Tabernacle (at tent) and then the temple once the people were settled and Jerusalem became the Temple.

Worship : **Worship = giving attention to God, Giving Him his worth, drawing near to kiss.** On arrival at the Temple Worshippers washed in the Mikvot (like pools for baptising) at the base of the steps leading up to the temple. Important to prepare for worship. To free oneself from The flesh and world and the devil pull to sin. The flesh is 'allergic to God ' (Richard Lovelace) and seeks to follow its own self sufficient ways. The world distracts us with little things in relation of the almighty presence of God. The devil : R. Lovelace: there is a force in our minds resisting prayer like a solid barrier. 'It belongs to the devil the enemy of your souls. 'he is painfully aware of the destructive force of even our dullest and weakest prayers and will go to any length to block them ' SO we invoke the Holy Spirit to come, to show us how to cleanse our hearts, and then to fill us.

Enter through Gates. With THANKS giving:

Thanksgiving is about God's actions Praise is about His being. Thanking God for his blessings was part of Jewish life. The Hebrew **berakah**: 'blessed are you Lord God King of the Universe' .who brings forth fruit from the wine/bred for the earth..' was the pattern prayer.

Jesus : used Berakah in Matt.11:28; whenever he broke bread; he taught on Thanksgiving: the healing of the 10 lepers.

Paul : used Greek word **Eucharistia**, from which we get the word Eucharist. He tells us in Col 2:7 **to be overflowing** with thankfulness; Col 4:2 to have an **attitude of thankfulness.**; in Phil 4:6 he says present your requests to **God with thanksgiving.**

What to do when in Difficult situations : Eucharistia has central word : Charis. This means Grace. Central to thanks giving is Grace, and we will need to give thanks by exercising grace in difficult times. What can I thank God for : **there are many blessings** :

1. Spiritual blessings : Ephesians 1:3-14 This 12 verses are one single sentence!

Verse 3 the thanks giving is focused on God the Father

Blessings received through Jesus

He chose us in him before the creation of the worlds.. to be holy(set apart)

In love He predestined us to be adopted as sons

In Him we have redemption, .. He made known to us the mystery of his pleasure

In Him we were also chosen , ..And you also were included

Then verses 13-14b thanksgiving for the blessings received from the holy spirit

2. Physical Blessings : for your body and for Gods care for you, Psalm 139

3. Emotional blessings : our sense, what we hear and smell and touch see, for inner healing

4. Material blessing we have some where to rest tonight. 5. Intellectual blessings, for the way we think of the beauty of Maths. science. Arts.6. Relational blessings :friends family marriage.

Courts of Praise : Choirs sang 24.7.. to God about who he is: **Psalm 84 longs for us to be with God.** 'my souls yearn even faints for the courts of the Lord, my heart and flesh cry out for the Living God.'

Can give thanks to some one : 'Thanks for that great meal, But we can also Praise that person: 'you are some one I really love '

So many relationship exist to day because of what we can get out of them.. praise when it is genuine is about giving to that person, truth and identity, significance and love. So it is with God.. it is about us giving to him, not taking from him. By praising God we stop looking downwards at ourselves and look up to him take our eyes of our hurts and sins and see the soul affirming reality of the beauty of God's heart.

We can pray back the scriptures : OT Names of God

Jehovah Roi : Always my Shepherd

Jehovah Jireh : Always my Provider

Jehovah Nissi : Always my Banner

Jehovah Shalom : Always my Peace

Jehovah TsidKenu : Always my Righteousness

Jehovah M'Kaddesh ; Always my Holiness

Jehovah Rapha : Always my Healer

Use these and myriad names of Jesus (download list : <http://www.prayertoday.org/2004/PDF/Guides/Jesus-Names-Alpha-List.PDF>)

Praise God and Jesus /Holy spirit for who He is. Praise can be corporate or individual, at your desk, in church building, as you travel and you are at home. Exuberant, quiet, with music, in silence, with words, in tongues. Temple is place of sacrifice and praise and thanks giving is sacrifice on your part there are often tears. As we give thanks to God and praise him for who he is we build up faith in us, we build a relationship of joy nad love we build up truth of who e are (Eph 1) and we give witness to those around and to the spiritual realms of darkness of who God is.



Witness: Questions to discuss

Begin with 3 questions for discussion (20 mins) then move into time of worship and listening as suggested by question 4,5.

1. Go through the spiritual blessings of Ephesians 1:3-16. Ask each other to explain them and to pick out one which has particular meaning at the moment for you.
2. How can you feed these great truths in to your lives and hearts so you live them out ?
3. What distractions of the world the flesh and the devil get in the way of your private and corporate worship of God ? What is the best way to deal with this ?.
4. **Worship** : Take 20 minutes or more to spend some time together preparing yourself for worship and having a time of thanksgiving followed by a time of praise. Use music, psalms, lists of names of God and Jesus, your own prayers and testimonies.
5. **Listening prayer**.(20 minutes) Our relationship with God is two way, He wants to speak to you too : Listen to God together. We all have the ability to hear him one way or another. Ask him to show you His love for you , and then share together what thought, picture, word, verse, impression you received from him as you all pray. Put those together and see what bigger picture he has shown you during this time. Don't worry if you think you have not received much. It is ore than you think. Thank God for what he is showing you and use it to praise him too. Share what you hear and see with your cluster leader.

Resource : read ' A Kingdom of Priests'- Deeper into God in Prayer' by Mark Stibbe. isbn: 0-232-52064-x

This is an excellent book and highly recommended