

ROMANS 12:1, 2

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”¹

The message this day is planned as the first in a series dealing with the topic of worship. In particular, I wish to begin exploring what worship is and what happens when we worship. In this way, I am endeavouring to ensure that we have a basis for our conduct as a congregation and as individuals during times of worship. These studies will require several weeks as we review the Word of God and as we think of what is required for worship to be pleasing to the Lord. Whatever else may be true concerning worship, I trust that we will discover that central to worship is meeting the Risen Saviour.

When the Apostle wrote the words of our text, he provided instruction for worship. Seldom do we think of this as a text instructing Christians in the elements of worship; we read these words and imagine that Paul is perhaps speaking of how we conduct our daily lives. However, reviewing the words of the text as they occur in that original language gives a different understanding from what may be commonly accepted among the saints. Permit me to read that opening sentence, employing a freer translation of the Apostle’s words. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your *logical liturgy*—(Greek, *logikós latreía*).” If the presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice is our logical liturgy, then it should be important for us to understand as precisely as possible what the Apostle is saying, adjusting our own worship to align with the biblical expectation.

In view is worship that we present to the Living God and to Christ Jesus the Son of God. Such worship is presented as logical, reasonable, thoughtful and deliberate. Biblical worship is not wild ecstasy; but rather it is defined by reason, by thoughtful service to God, by rational acts performed deliberately. The word that is translated “spiritual” in the text occurs but one other time in the New Testament, when Peter urges Christians, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual (*logical*) milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation” [1 PETER 2:2].

The word translated “worship” in our text occurs but five times in the New Testament. Jesus warned of a time when religious people would put the disciples out of the synagogues, and such people would kill even disciples, arguing that they were “offering service [*latreía*] to God” [JOHN 16:2]. The author of the Letter to Hebrew Christians spoke of priests performing in the outer section of the Temple “their ritual duties [*latreía*]” [HEBREWS 9:6]. That author also reminded readers that “the first covenant had regulations for worship [*latreía*]” [HEBREWS 9:1]. In addition to using this word in our text, Paul had earlier written these words concerning the Jewish forebears of our Faith: “They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship [*latreía*]...” [ROMANS 9:4]. Therefore, what is in view when this word is employed is the concept of service offered to God. This service is qualified as reasonable, sensible or even logical.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

I confess that for most of us who name the Name of Christ the Lord, worship is an event we plan—a performance that we endure in order to say that we have performed a duty. However, as the Apostle wrote the words of our text, I believe he was urging us as followers of the Risen Son of God to prepare for and to anticipate a dynamic, life-changing event—worship. Join me as we unpack the passage to learn the facts about spiritual worship.

WORSHIP IS CONTINUAL — For the child of God living in the presence of the Living God, worship is continual. Worship is ongoing for him who is known by the Lord and who walks in His presence. Worship is not so much planned as it is spontaneous. Paul urges believers “to present [their] bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God” [ROMANS 12:1 NET BIBLE]. In this instance, the participle and the two adjectives are taken as predicates in relation to “sacrifice.” This makes Paul’s admonition more emphatic still, which I believe to have been his intent in writing these words.

The presentation of the body is to be a one-time act for the child of God. This is not something that should need to be done repeatedly. Years ago, among many evangelical churches, and certainly among Baptists, the invitation frequently included a call to “recommit” one’s life to the Lord. Consequently, I witnessed multiple people coming to the altar asking for prayer as they “recommitted” their lives to Christ and to His service. I was disturbed by this phenomenon, as I did not see a single call in Scripture for recommitment. I did observe, however, multiple places calling for the lost to trust Christ the Lord—in effect, calling them to commit themselves to His reign.

Early in my Christian walk, I found myself rebelling against the idea of recommitment. This passage convinced me that such a call was unbiblical. If we commit ourselves to Christ, it is enough. There is no need to recommit our lives to Him if we have entrusted ourselves to Him. It is as though He is unable to keep His own, or as though the Spirit of God is unable to change the life of those in whom He dwells.

There is a serious problem in contemporary Christian service. Our churches are filled with church members who are unconverted. The average professing Christian lives a life that is indistinguishable from the world about her. Church members see joining the congregation as somewhat akin to joining a service club or taking our membership in a political party. There is a lot of excitement in belonging to a group, there is a measure of comfort in a shared experience, but there is no true change in lifestyle.

Christian Smith identified the religious faith of American teenagers as “moralistic therapeutic deism.” According to his analysis and studies, the creed of this religion may be identified as:

- A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
- God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
- The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
- God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
- Good people go to heaven when they die.²

² Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, **Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers** (Oxford University Press, New York, NY 2005) 162-3

American teenagers did not simply invent this distorted religious view—they adopted the faith that was lived out before their eyes by their parents! In short, the prevailing religiosity that Smith charges teenagers as holding was communicated to them by their parents. I suggest that this view of religious faith is the prevailing view of Canadian evangelical churches.

If the members of our churches had met the Living Christ, if our fellow church members had truly been born from above as result of knowing the True and Living God, would they not gladly make the decision to present their bodies as a sacrifice? Take note of a point of grammar. When Paul calls on believers to present their bodies as a sacrifice, he employs the aorist tense, which would indicate that such a presentation is to be an act that is performed once; thus, it need not be repeated! For some decades there has been a rot sapping the energy of the churches.

Long years ago, a Texas Baptist divine wrote, “It is greatly to be feared that much of the preaching of modern times has lost its depth and power. The plough does not run deep enough. There is no deep conviction of sin. There is no mourning for sin such as we find set forth in Zechariah 13. We find our way to a modern profession of religion, dry-eyed. There is no weeping in it. And hence, feeling ourselves to be but little sinners, we need only a little Saviour.”³ This assessment was originally written in the early twentieth century. At that time, the preacher saw evidence of incomplete conversion, of growing emphasis on membership in the assembly than in conversion, of accepting statements affirming faith while refusing to hold the membership of the congregation accountable for actions.

If the worship in Heaven is indicative of God’s ideal for mankind, then worship should be a continuing experience. Think of just a couple of instances recorded by John in the Revelation. In the fourth chapter, the Revelator writes: “Around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!’

“And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

‘Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.’”

[REVELATION 4:6b-11]

In Heaven, the holy angels worship continually, and the redeemed, represented by the twenty-four elders, worship continually!

³ B. H. Carroll, **An Interpretation of the English Bible: James, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Volume 13** (Ages Software, © 2002) 42

Again, this continuing worship is dramatically witnessed as the Lamb is revealed to John. “Between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,

‘Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.’

“Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!’ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!’ And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ and the elders fell down and worshiped” [REVELATION 5:6-14].

The angels are constantly glorifying God—worshipping the Lamb of God. And whenever they worship Him—which is continual—the redeemed of God unite their voices and praise Him, glorifying His Name. Worship is the eternal occupation of the redeemed of God. Our worship today is preparing us for our eternal service to God.

May I say, worship is not natural—it is supernatural. The natural man will soon find true worship boring, mind numbing, so tedious that it is to be avoided at any cost. However, one who knows the Living God will be continually fascinated and astonished as one facet after another of His majesty and power and glory is unveiled. The character of our God is made known as we spend time in His presence; and as we spend time in His presence, we will find that we are compelled to worship Him. This is not a compulsion that is to be dreaded and avoided; it is a delightful compulsion that makes us better because we have been in His presence.

That worship is meant to be continual is certainly inferred by the revelation of our occupation in eternity; but in our text, worship is specifically presented when the Apostle writes, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God” [ROMANS 12:2]. The commands—do not “be conformed” and “be transformed”—are present tense in that Greek tongue, indicating an action that is initiated at a point in time and that then continues, whether iterated or uninterrupted. The point in time at which worship is to begin is that time when the child of God presents his body as a living sacrifice. From that point onward, worship is to mark the life of the believer. Additionally, the verb “testing,” is also a present tense, indicating that the Christian is to endeavour continually to discern the will of God. It is not that the will of God is fluid or ephemeral, but that we often permit ourselves to be distracted so that we no longer see His will. Therefore, we must continually test our own desires and motives to ensure they are pure.

WORSHIP IS LOGICAL — Paul has stated that the presentation of our bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy and pleasing to God, is reasonable. To be certain, the translation I use, and perhaps the translation you use, speaks of “spiritual worship.” The word the Apostle used is one of those expressive words that convey much more than we imagine. To the Greek mind, using the mind was to appeal to the spirit of an individual. Thus, thinking people were spiritual people. Therefore, when we are thoughtful, deliberate, sentient before the Lord, we are acting spiritual. When we are operating solely in the realm of the emotional, we are not spiritual. This is the reason Paul will attest, “the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” [1 CORINTHIANS 14:32]. This understanding of the Spirit’s work in the heart of a believer lies behind the apostolic declaration, “I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also” [1 CORINTHIANS 14:15].

Let’s go back a little bit to the matter of coming to faith in the Risen Saviour. There is a perception among some people that faith is a “leap in the dark.” Nothing could be farther from truth. Faith is acting on what you have received as true and accurate. Though we put faith in the unseen God, that does not mean that He is unknown. We come to God because we are convicted by His Spirit. This is a reason for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps you recall the words Jesus spoke to His disciples shortly before His Passion. “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” [JOHN 16:7-11]. God’s Spirit convicts concerning sin and righteousness and judgement. Thus, whenever an individual comes to faith in the Son of God she has already been convicted of her sinful condition. Rather than a “leap in the dark,” there is certainty of her condition.

If convicted of sin, the sinner is also convinced of the veracity of the message of life in the Son of God. He will have become convinced by the operation of God’s Spirit in his life that Jesus died because of his sin and that He rose from the dead. He will not come to a dead Saviour, but rather he comes to One who lives, just as was declared to John when he met the Risen Son of God on Patmos: “I died, and behold I am alive forevermore” [REVELATION 1:18].

Thus, faith is reasonable. Though the world would say of the Christian and her faith, “You are out of your mind!” the Christian will say with the Apostle, “I am not out of my mind... I am speaking true and rational words” [ACTS 26:25]. With the Apostle Peter, the believer can testify, “We did not follow cleverly devised myths” [2 PETER 1:16a]. Because God is true, each Christian will say of her testimony, “I am speaking the truth in Christ” [see ROMANS 9:1]. Really, the Faith we have received is logical; this Faith is reasonable and rational. If your belief is based upon supposition and guesstimates, you are in error. The Faith of Christ the Lord is true and reasonable. The child of God can be confident that God has spoken truthfully and that the Faith embraced is sensible and sound.

Because the Faith is reasonable, it should not be surprising that the worship sought for presentation before the Lord is expected to be reasonable and rational. Christian worshippers come before the Lord with careful deliberation. Those who approach God are to be thoughtful and temperate in worship. The decision to present the body as a sacrifice is a deliberate act; it is not to be driven by emotion, but by reason. Presenting the body is not an act that strips us of dignity; rather, the presentation of our bodies is to offer them for service as God directs. Worship that is pleasing to God is reasonable and right.

Examples of worship in the New Testament demonstrate that the worshippers thoughtfully approach the Lord. Contrast that observation with the fact that worship in contemporary congregations seeks first to stimulate the emotions. This is the reason for the “dreamy stance” as vapid verses are sung repeatedly and lighting in church sanctuaries emulates a rock production. Hymns are primarily about what is felt when we approach to worship rather than focusing on the character of Him whom we worship. New Testament worshippers approached based on knowledge; contemporary worshippers lead with the heart. In the apostolic churches, worshippers sought to know the presence of the Lord; among contemporary churches, worshippers endeavour to feel the presence of the Lord.

There is a truism to be noted in these observations. If the worshipper uses the mind, the emotions will be stimulated. If the worshipper seeks to stimulate the emotions, they may get a transient “high,” but he will fail in his efforts to meet the Living God. Knowing the Lord must be important as it is encouraged frequently in the Word of God. Think of a few instances where we are taught to “know the Lord.”

Isaiah speaks of a day when “the LORD will make Himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them” [ISAIAH 19:21]. This points to a day during the Millennial reign of the Son of God, and it specifically states that the Egyptians will both know the LORD and worship before Him because they know Him.

Jeremiah writes of a day that is coming when Israel will be transformed. He writes, “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” [JEREMIAH 31:33, 34].

The writer of the Letter to Hebrew Christians, drawing on Jeremiah’s prophecy, looks forward to the day when Israel shall seek the Lord. He sees a day when,

“They shall not teach, each one his neighbour,
and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
for they shall all know Me,
from the least of them to the greatest”

[HEBREWS 8:11].

Likewise, Hosea prophesies of a day when Israel “shall know the LORD” [HOSEA 2:20]. Surprisingly, in light of contemporary concepts of worship, there is not a single command to “feel” the presence of the Lord. There are, however, multiple instances of instruction for worshippers “know the Lord.”

I do not want to leave the impression that music is somehow invalid as an instrument of worship. Obviously, that is not correct. We have an entire book of the Bible that consists of “songs.” We call it the Psalms. Paul encourages believers to address “one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ” [EPHESIANS 5:19, 20]. The music being presented is to be offered to God rather than being intended to address our emotions. We are to sing to the Lord, not for our benefit.

He makes a very similar admonition in the Letter to Christians in Colosse. There, he writes, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” [see **COLOSSIANS 3:16**]. What must not be overlooked in this instance is that the Apostle encourages the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs that grow out of the Word of Christ dwelling in us. Much of contemporary music grows out of our experiences—in particular, how we feel—rather than being grounded in the Word of God. I do encourage singing; but I encourage us to ensure that our songs focus on the character of God. Those elements that are ancillary to worship should focus our attention on the attributes of God rather than focusing on what we feel about God or what we feel at any given time.

For just a moment, it is significant to emphasise the points that we have just witnessed from the Word. *The singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is encouraged.* When we sing, *we are to sing to the Lord* and not as a performance for our neighbours. This means, quite simply, that each worshipper is encouraged to sing heartily, as to the Lord. Finally, the songs we sing are not to be selected because of the melody, nor because they touch an emotional chord; *they are to be chosen because they instruct us in the attributes of God.* Our music is to be theologically precise, building us in this most holy Faith.

Even brief thought will bear out the veracity of the concept of seeking God rather than seeking an experience. If I seek to know the Lord, seeking to meet Him and to know Him, I cannot help but be awed by His majesty and power. However, if I seek His majesty and power, it does not follow that I actually know Him. A spiritual high is at best transient, ephemeral, a gossamer concept that is impossible to maintain. However, knowing God intimately will transform me, and that raises the final concept concerning worship—worship is transformational.

WORSHIP IS TRANSFORMATIONAL — One of the surest evidences that modern Christians do not worship is the fact that they remain unchanged after worship. All who came into the presence of God are changed. The records provided in the Word of God speak of people who were transformed. How could it be otherwise? How could one come into the presence of One who can only be described as “Other” and remained as she was before?

One of the sad charges that can be brought against modern Christians is that we can be explained. There is always a pseudo-psychologist prepared to render a verdict on our actions. The news media believes they can explain the phenomenon of the Christian; too often, they are correct. However, who can explain a Saul? Who can explain a man known for being rabid against these hated worshippers of an executed criminal who suddenly begins to preach Christ? Who can explain why he changed so radically from pursuing Christians to making Christians?

We read, “Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting’” [**ACTS 9:1-5**].

Later, he spoke of that transformation. “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

“As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do’” [ACTS 22:4-10].

What happened? He met the Risen Son of God and he was changed.

I am always humbled by the statement Luke makes concerning Peter and John when they were haled before the Sanhedrin for the first time. “When [the council] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognised that they had been with Jesus” [ACTS 4:13]. When an individual spends time in the presence of the Risen Son of God, they will be changed, and the transformation will be apparent to any who meet them. Does the world see us as different? Or are we just odd?

Moses was forty days and forty nights in the presence of the Lord. During that time, God gave him the Ten Words, which he wrote on tablets. Here is the account that is so humbling. “When Moses came down from Mount ... [he] did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face” [EXODUS 34:29-33].

Here is my concern. Moses was transformed, and the transformation was obvious to all who saw him. We say we have been in the presence of the Lord, but no one takes notice of us. We say we have waited on the Lord, but no one is in awe of us! We say we have worshipped in His presence on Sunday, and Monday dawns just as every other day and we are unchanged. Our colleagues are not impressed because we are as we have always been—nothing has changed. You cannot spend time in the presence of the Living God and remain as you were before. You cannot be in the presence of the Risen Son of God and be as you have always been.

What worshipper of the Living God can read the account of Isaiah’s call without being moved? His account of that day—a day which must surely have been seared in his memory, informs us that he had gone up to the Temple. The death of the king appears to have deeply affected Isaiah. He was concerned for the welfare of the nation, concerned for the continuation of the reforms Uzziah had instituted, concerned about what would happen next. I don’t know that he intended to worship so much as spend time in the House of God to clear his mind. However, coming into the Temple, everything changed.

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!’

“And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.” Isaiah saw God; he heard the holy angels worshipping Him. Unlike so many modern worshippers, Isaiah’s immediate reaction was terror. He cried out, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

“Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’

“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’ And he said, “Go” [ISAIAH 6:1-9].

Isaiah saw the Lord in His unveiled glory, and he was forever changed. You and I will be forever changed if we see the Lord in His unveiled glory. God called; and Isaiah answered. In this account is witnessed the reality of Amos’ query”

“The lion has roared;
who will not fear?
The Lord GOD has spoken;
who can but prophesy?”

[AMOS 3:8]

When Christians will not warn sinners against continuing in sin, when Christians will not tell their neighbours or even their own children of Christ and His salvation, when Christians will not speak of His imminent return I can only conclude that they have never heard the voice of the Lord—they have not been in His presence.

John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day when he heard a voice behind him. What a voice it was! It was like a trumpet. It was commanding. He turned to see the voice only to be awestruck by what he saw. “I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.”

No wonder that when he saw this terrifying personage, he fell at his feet as though he were dead. It was the Risen Christ. When John fell, the Master laid His right hand on him and spoke to encourage him. “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches” [REVELATION 1:12-20].

When did we last find ourselves overcome with awe in the presence of the Lord? When did we last fall before Him, the strength flowing from our legs as water from a punctured bottle? The surest evidence that we have not been in his presence is that we are still standing, that we are the same as we have always been. What is worse, we are prepared to boast in our familiarity with this Glorious Saviour!

I long for us to worship; and if we do worship, we will discover that our worship is continual, logical and transformational. Who is prepared to worship the Lord? Who seeks Him? Perhaps you cannot worship because you have never known Him. Your great need is to know the Lord. He died because of you and rose for you. This is the reason the Word of God says, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. It is with the heart and one believes and is made right with God, and with the mouth that one confesses and is set free.” That passage continues by declaring, “Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved” [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13].⁴

I pray you are a Christian. I pray that you have faith in the Living Son of God. If not, let this be the day that you believe His gracious message, receiving His reign over your life; let this be the day you are saved and born from above and into His Kingdom. Amen.

⁴ Author's translation