

Worship Beyond Words

The Worshipping Church Part 5

Revelation 4:9-10 1-29-2012

Summary: Revelation is full of interjections of praise after all the judgments, teaching us that God's hard providence is worthy of our praise. Verses 9 and 10 show us that worship is not bound by the literal meaning of the lyrics (give glory, honor, and thanks by singing about attributes). We sing to one another and God simultaneously, and our worship goes beyond music to physical expressions.

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Revelation 4:1-11 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. 4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Introduction: Interjections of Praise

Pop quiz on the book of Revelation. Do you know what is repeated in chapters 1, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, and 19? Outbursts of praise. All through the book, something happens, and there is an outburst of praise, then something else, then another outburst. In the movies when a judge delivers a verdict, and all the people in the courtroom erupt into a loud cheer because they feel passionately that justice was finally done, the judge bangs his gavel and says, "Order in the court! One more outburst like that

and I'll clear this courtroom!" God is not like that. He allows constant outbursts of praise in His courtroom. Interjections of approval and delight over what God is doing are as appropriate as they can be. If we interrupt a football game with cheers every time our team gets a first down, we should really erupt with celebration and cheering whenever God unfolds another chapter of His great work, shouldn't we? When a performer is up on stage and there is dead silence after each thing he does, he thinks, "Man, I'm dying up here." That does not happen to God in the book of Revelation. The creation rejoices in the works of its Creator.

In fact, would you agree with this - that if we took all those nine sections out of the book of Revelation, the book would be incomplete? You would still have all the information about the trumpets and seals and bowls and angels and demons and judgments and the New Jerusalem and all the exciting things people think of when they think of what this book is all about. And yet, you could have all those things and the book would be incomplete if it were not for the interjections of worship.

The way people talk about the book of Revelation you would think the entire book is mainly about the rapture and the Millennium. But in Revelation there are zero verses about the rapture, six verses about the Millennium - the New Jerusalem gets twenty-seven verses, but forty-four verses describing the interjections of worship. That is more than ten percent of the entire book of Revelation devoted to these responses of worship to everything God does.

Praising Hard Providence

And what is it that God is doing that generates all this praise? Is it His provision of abundant food for the world? Causing the sun to rise every morning? Sending rain in season so the crops will grow? No. This praise is not in response to the kinds of things that everybody automatically loves. This praise is in response to things that God is doing that cause unbelievers to curse Him. The book of Revelation is mainly about judgment. God pours out His wrath on the world. It is violent and painful and severe and shocking. And that is what the saints and the heavenly beings respond to with worship.

I think one reason these sections are such an important part of the book of Revelation is so we understand that all this judgment and punishment and wrath is not God at His worst. God knows that we are prone to think we need to apologize for His wrath. So often our presentation of God is such that it implies He is really at His best when He is showing His kindness and benevolence, and not so much when He is expressing wrath and judgment. So God gives us the book of Revelation to show us how absolutely wonderful His wrath and judgment and holiness really are. They are the attributes that bring evil to a final end.

Learning to delight in hard providence is such an important principle for living the Christian life. For example, it is the solution to anger. When we get angry because of unpleasant circumstances, that is a failure to see the greatness of God in hard providence. When hard things happen to us and we grumble or complain or get angry or fall into self-pity - we are mimicking the unbelievers in the book of Revelation who curse God for His judgments. But if we turned our eyes to the fact that God sent those hard circumstances - He decided it would be best for you to lose your car keys or for your computer to blue-screen or for the bolt to drop down inside the engine or for your kids to make a huge mess or for someone to cut you off on the highway - if we opened our eyes to the fact that those things come from God and God only does good things, then we would be like the saints and the elders and cherubim in Revelation who erupt with praise whenever God does *anything*.

So Revelation is a book about judgment and worship, and all the descriptions of worship begin with the four living creatures giving glory, honor, and thanks to God the Father, who sits on the throne. They see His glory, they respond by giving God glory, honor, and thanks. But the fascinating thing we discovered last week was that they give God glory honor and thanks by singing a song that does not say a word about glory or honor or thanks. Their song only focused on God's attributes, and yet it succeeded in the goal of glorifying, honoring, and thanking God.

Worship Beyond Lyrics

Giving Honor

That is what makes worship worship - if it has those results. We talked about glorifying God last week, so let's pick up where we left off and talk about giving God not only glory, but also honor.

Personal and direct

Giving honor and giving glory are very similar ideas. In fact sometimes they are used as synonyms. However there are some shades of difference. When we glorify God we are seeking to unveil what is veiled in our eyes. We are trying to pull back the curtain and position ourselves for the best possible view of what God is like. So there is a one-another kind of focus. If I am trying to glorify God in your eyes, then I am thinking about God but I am also thinking about you ... and me. I want you and me to get a clearer glimpse. But when I think about *honoring* God, the attention is more directly on God. Instead of "Hey, everybody, let's look at His glory," it's more, "Dear God, I want You to feel respected and exalted and revered by me right now."

Worth

The Greek word for honor has to do with worth or value. In fact, that word is often translated "money." Sometimes it refers to financial value and other times it refers to personal value. So glorifying God is when you see marvelous things about Him and marvel - and put those things on display. Honoring God is when you want to do something to show how priceless He is in your eyes, how much you value Him above other things.

Psalm 22:3 says that God enthrones Himself on the praises of His people. A heart that honors God is a heart that says, "God, enthrone Yourself on the praise I'm offering right now. Let my praises point to Your dignity and worth."

Fighting Sin

As I have been studying this the past couple weeks I have started to get into the habit of asking myself periodically through the day, "Am I showing Him respect right now?" Not just, "Am I obeying Him?" but "Am I showing Him respect?" And I have found it helpful in my battle against the flesh.

Sometimes when we see the worthiness of God to be honored, we wish we could do something really big to honor Him. But what can you do? You cannot roll out a red carpet, you cannot give Him anything He does not already have, you cannot put a crown on His head or anything. But one thing you can do is prefer Him above the pleasures of sin. And the greater the pleasure, the greater your capacity to honor Him by preferring Him over that pleasure.

Giving Thanks

So what is the heart and soul of worship? It is when what comes out of your heart gives God glory, gives God honor, and then one more - thanks. When the four living creatures sang about God's holiness, supremacy, and eternity, in their hearts there was a desire to glorify Him, a desire to honor Him, and a desire to thank Him. They were thankful to God for the way in which He used those attributes to benefit them.

Major Part of Worship

Thanksgiving is always a huge part of worship, wherever you look in Scripture. In the Old Covenant system they had thank offerings, thanksgiving is everywhere in the Psalms, you see it repeatedly in the worship scenes in Revelation, and the key texts on corporate praise in the Epistles also highlight it.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Ephesians 5:18 Be filled by the Spirit. 19 Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything

All of our worship should be saturated with gratitude.

The Meaning of Gratitude

But what is gratitude? Is it just saying, “thank you?” Is it feeling indebted? No, we all know it is possible to say, “thank you,” or feel indebted without being grateful. Gratitude is an attitude of heart that receives a gift of love and responds with some kind of expression that means, “I love you, too.” Or to say it another way, gratitude is a delight in the giver. We all know it is possible to like a gift and still not be grateful. The kid who opens a birthday present, and runs off to play with it without even acknowledging the person who gave it to him - even though he likes the gift, he is not thankful. Thankfulness is not just saying, “Thank You,” to God, and it is not just enjoying God’s gifts, and it is not just realizing those gifts are from God. Gratitude is a feeling of love for and delight in the Giver of the gifts.

And in this case the gift is the benefit that comes to us when we experience the attributes of God. God’s revelation of His attributes is a priceless, beneficial gift to us. That is not true for everyone. God’s holiness is a disaster for unforgiven sinners. God’s supremacy is a horror for His enemies. And His eternality is a nightmare for those who suffer His wrath forever. But for us, His children, He expresses all those things toward us in ways that only benefit us, and He does that as an expression of love for us. And when we realize that, and it causes us to become more delighted in Him, and we express that feeling of delight, that expression is gratitude.

Beyond the Lyrics

So the four living creatures never said the words, “Thank You,” in their song, never said, “We honor You,” or “We glorify You,” but their song brought God glory, honor, and thanks. How does that work? How can a song that never uses the words glory, honor, or thanks give God glory, honor, and thanks? The thing we learn from this text is that evidently, expressions of true praise go way beyond the mere literal meaning of the lyrics.

Praise is not limited by the lyrics of the songs we sing. What gets communicated to God is what is in your heart, not just the strict, technical, literal meaning of the words of the song. When we sing a song together, in the exact same song some of you are expressing gratitude, others are seeking to show God great honor and reverence, others are expressing repentance for their sin, others are crying out to God to satisfy the thirst of their dried up soul, and others are celebrating the fullness of their satisfied soul.

For example, that first song we sang today - He Reigns. If you could scan the hearts in the sanctuary as we sing that song, you would see all kinds of forms of worship. One person might be celebrating the world-wide fame of our God - thinking about His worthiness to be universally praised by men and women of every tribe and tongue and nation and people. So that person’s singing is an expression of delight in God’s worthiness to be praised.

Someone else might be focusing on the unbelievable fact that he is allowed to participate in this grand, holy choir. “Given when I did this past week, the sins I have committed in my lifetime, I don’t deserve to be one of the voices upon which God enthrones Himself. And yet by His infinite mercy, here I am!”

So for the first person it is a song giving honor to God, and for the second person it is a song of

gratitude.

For someone else it might be an expression of longing and desire. We get to the chorus and sing, “Glory, glory, hallelujah He reigns!” and that person is thinking, “*God, there’s no hallelujah in my heart.*” Your reign seems like a dry, abstract, theological idea that is just words to me right now. It’s not thrilling my soul and driving me to shout hallelujah. Oh Lord, come to me this morning and awaken my soul to reality.”

Singing what you don’t feel

This is my response to that question that came up a couple weeks ago about singing songs that do not really represent what is going on in your heart. What should you do when the lyrics in a song do not represent what you actually feel in your heart? A song says, “I love you, Lord, with all my heart” but the reality is your heart is very divided and loves all kinds of sinful things. Or “As the deer panteth for the water so my soul longeth after You ... You alone are my heart’s desire...,” and you don’t feel any of that. Is it appropriate to sing things that do not really represent how we feel or are not even really true of us?

Once again, we take our cues from the Psalms. The book of Psalms teaches us the right way to praise God, and it has plenty of statements like, “I love You, Lord” (Ps.18:1), “I call to You with all my heart” (Ps.119:45), “There’s nothing on earth I desire besides You” (Ps.73:25). So when we are reading through Scripture, what are we supposed to do when we come to those statements? Should we skip over them if they are not exactly how we are feeling at that moment? If so, that would make it awfully hard to use those psalms in corporate praise, because there is never going to be a time when we are all in exactly the same situation. Every Sunday some of you come in here full of joy, and others full of sorrow. Some are full of hope, others are in despair. Some are full of desire for God, others have almost no conscious desire for God. If we could only sing what we all feel, we could never sing any of those portions of the Psalms that speak of those things.

I would like to suggest that there is a way for us to sing those kinds of things together. When you are praying through the Psalms and you come to those statements, what do you do? Don’t you just convert them to apply to what is in your heart? If I am reading a psalm and it says, “I’m full of joy,” and I look into my heart and see almost no joy, I pray that psalm as a prayer of desire.

“God, I don’t have this virtue, but I want it.”

Or, “I have it a little bit, but I want it more,” - like the guy in **Mark 9:24 - I believe. Help my unbelief.** So if you have the joy or love or whatever the virtue in the song is, you offer that to God as worship. If you do not have it but want it, you offer that desire to God as worship. And if you do not even want it, then you repent of that sin and offer your repentance to God as worship. So no matter how you feel or what is going on in your heart, you have the ability to worship God.

You are not limited to what is already on your heart

And this is another benefit of worship music. Ephesians 5:19 is very clear that we are to use songs in our corporate praise. And one reason why songs are so helpful is the fact that they force us out of the narrow ruts we fall into. Most of us, when we come before God, will talk to Him about whatever is most on our hearts, and not much else. If I am discouraged, then I mostly pray to Him about my discouragement, and various things related to that. But worship songs expand our praise so much broader and wider than we naturally tend to go. If you would have just stayed in bed this morning, and worshipped on your own all by yourself as you were lying in bed, do you think it would have occurred to you to praise God for His worthiness to be praised by voices from every nation and tribe and people and tongue? Or His worthiness to be praised because He is the Lamb, looking as though He had been slain? Or the rainbows of color around His throne, or the twenty-four elders casting down their crowns before Him?

Praise music takes us from where we are and pushes us into all kinds of new arenas of praise with wonderful, poetic beauty and musical enhancement. And if the song describes something that is not

really what you are feeling, you can sing it with all your heart as a prayer, asking the Lord to grant the thing you are singing, because like the four living creatures, we worship beyond lyrics.

Worship Beyond Pronouns

The direction of our praise To whom do we sing?

Secondly, we worship beyond pronouns. We have seen the worship of the four living creatures. Next comes the worship of the twenty-four elders. But before we look at their worship, let's think a little more about what the text says about the relationship between the two.

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever.

The elders' worship is a response to the living creatures' worship. It is provoked by and builds upon the worship of others. In this passage the elders respond to what the living creatures do, then later on the living creatures respond to what the elders do.

Responsive Worship

And this points us once again to the importance of the corporate aspect of worship. Private worship is not enough. According to Ephesians 5:19, to whom are we singing when we offer our songs, hymns, and spiritual songs?

Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and make music in your heart to the Lord

Ultimately all our praises are directed to the Lord, since He is the one we are worshipping. And yet it also says we are **speaking to one another**. We praise God by speaking to God in the presence of one another, and we praise God by speaking to one another about God.

I used to want to only do songs that were written in the second person - addressing God directly, because I did not understand this principle. (And because I tend to be a very literal person - my brain just is not very poetic, and so I have never been very good with emotional kinds of communication.) But God designed emotional communication to be different from literal communication. And once again it was the Psalms that reeled me back in. Many of the psalms are addressed directly to God and many are not. Every time you see the phrase, "Praise the Lord," - syntactically that is not addressed to God. (If it were addressed to God it would be, "Praise You" in the second person.) "Praise Him" in the third person is addressed to fellow worshippers, but it is still sung to God.

In order for us to fulfill the command in Ephesians 5:19, all our songs must be sung to God and to one another. So if it is written in the second person, "Lord, You are holy"..., - I sing that directly to God but I should also have an awareness of all of you, so that I am proclaiming His holiness to the assembly. And when I sing a song that is addressed to you, and God is referred to in the third person, "O worship the King, all glorious above, and gratefully sing...", or "How great is our God, sing with me, How great is our God...", - technically I am singing to all of you, but at the same time I am offering the song to God as a praise offering. I am saying, "God, I'm proclaiming Your greatness to my brothers and sisters, and I'm offering this proclamation as an offering of worship to You." That is why the psalmists switch back and forth so freely between addressing fellow worshippers and addressing God.

Psalms 93:1 The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and is armed with strength. ... 2 Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.

So we worship beyond lyrics by offering God more than the literal meaning of the lyrics, and we worship beyond pronouns by singing to one another and to God simultaneously in every song.

Worship Beyond Singing: External Expression

So we worship beyond the lyrics, we worship beyond the pronouns, and one more - we worship beyond singing.

Revelation 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever.

They did not just sing - they fell down on the ground.

The words for worship

There are two Greek words for worship. One is *latreuo*. When someone worships an idol it is called idol-latry. Idolatry is when you *latreuo* an idol. *Latreuo* literally means “service” (in the sense of religious observance - like we would use the term “worship service”). When you offer prayers, praise, glory, honor, thanks, reverence, veneration - all those things we see in the interludes in the book of Revelation – that is *latreuo*.

The other common word for worship is *proskuneo*, which literally means to hit the deck. You kneel or bow or fall on your face before God – that is *proskuneo*. And most of the time that word is used literally – literally, physically going down on the ground. Obviously that refers to more than just the physical action. If someone tripped on his shoelaces and fell on his face, that would not be called *proskuneo*. It does not refer to any kind of falling on your face. It is the falling on your face that means, “I honor You as God. You are the Creator; I am Your creature. You reign supreme; I’m your humble servant.” If you bow before someone in order to say that, that is *proskuneo*. And that is what the elders are doing here. They are worshipping God both spiritually and physically. They want to worship Him with their whole being.

Physical expression alone is not worship. If you come to church, sing, raise your hands, bow down, and fall on your face; but your heart is not worshipping, then it is all meaningless. So physical expression itself is not worship; however, true worship will involve some kind of expression. Everywhere you look in Scripture, whenever there is worship, there is some external, physical expression. We see that even in Jesus’ example. The last time He was ever seen before His ascension is in Luke 24:50, where He lifts up his hands in prayer.

That is the nature of love. Where there is love there will be some kind of expression. Kissing your wife is not necessarily love. In fact, if there is no love in other areas, a kiss might be repulsive to her. However, where there is love, the kisses will be there. God made us whole beings. Your body and spirit are interconnected and entwined and interdependent so when something happens to the physical part of you it affects the non-physical part of you, and vice versa. If someone punches you in the face, that can affect your mood, right? If you don’t get enough sleep, or you catch a cold, it can make you more susceptible to give in to the temptation to nurse a grudge.

And it works the other way too. Sometimes pangs of conscience can cause physical pain in your stomach. God made us psychosomatic beings, and when we do something important, it should be done with all our being - body and spirit. And when it comes to worship, the role of the body that we see in God’s Word is mostly singing, shouting, kneeling, falling down on the ground, bowing, standing, lifting up the hands, clapping, and dancing.

Singing, Shouting, and Clapping

Singing we have already talked about – Ephesians 5:19. Shouting is also important.

Revelation 19:1 After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God

3 And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! ... 4 The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they shouted: "Amen, Hallelujah!" ... 6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Not only that, but Scripture teaches us to clap. I think we need to be very careful with clapping, because in our culture clapping after a song generally means, "You did a great job performer!" And that is the last thing we want to do in worship - focus on the people playing the music. So after a solo in church, I don't like clapping. I think "amen's" are a lot more fitting for worship. But clapping in the middle of a song when there is an especially joyful portion - that can be a wonderful part of praise. I would love it if we did that more often. And even clapping at the end of a song, as long as we are crystal clear that we are not applauding the musicians, but expressing joy in the Lord, is a good thing.

God is worthy to be praised exuberantly. He is so great, He is worthy of enthusiastic, excited, heartfelt, musical, wholehearted praise. If you can play an instrument - use that. If you can't, then just sing. And if you can't sing - shout and clap.

Psalms 33:3 Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

Psalms 47:1 Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

Psalms 66:1 Shout with joy to God, all the earth!

Psalms 95:1 Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

Psalms 98:4 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music

I could go on and on and on. If you have joy in your heart but it does not seem to make it out of your mouth, that is not a powerful enough joy. In fact, it should not only open your mouth and move your hands, it should get the rest of your body moving, too - bowing and kneeling.

Kneeling and Bowing

I hope you are not too cool to bow or kneel during corporate worship, because the greatest worshippers in existence before the very throne of the Almighty are not so dignified that they are above physical expressions in worship. They literally fall down on the ground - in public.

Kneeling down, bowing your head, getting down on your face - things like that can amplify feelings of reverence and honor in your heart. You have a sense of being awed a little bit by God's greatness, and if you kneel down it can increase that feeling. The godly emotions that we have start out weak and fragile and they need to be cultivated and nurtured, like a little tiny flame that could blow out at any moment, and you are trying to get it going.

I realize it is hard to kneel during corporate worship because we have the rows so close together. I am hoping when we start the Saturday service it will free up enough room so we can have enough space between the rows so you can kneel. But if you are self-conscious about kneeling - think about that for a second. Embarrassed to bow before the King of kings when you are surrounded by the saints of the living God who desire more than anything else to see Him honored? Something is seriously wrong with that picture.

Standing

Another way to show respect to God physically in worship is by standing. We see that very often

in Scripture. In fact, it seems to be the default position for prayer.

Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him

Standing is a way to express reverence and respect. If you are new here you may have noticed that we do not give a lot of direction from the platform on when to stand or sit. We leave it up to you most of the time because standing or sitting is meaningless if the only reason you are doing it is because someone on the platform told you to do it. What we want you to do is to give expression to what is in your heart. If we are singing and you have a feeling of humility in your heart, sit down and bow your head like you do when we pray. Or kneel on the ground. And if there is a moment in your worship where you have a particular sense of reverence and awe and a special desire to show honor to God, stand up, or lift your hands, or both. We leave it up to you because we want your standing to mean something, and we want your sitting to mean something.

Now, once in a while we will give a direction for the whole congregation. Sometimes it can be moving and powerful when we all do something in unison, and as long as everyone understands this principle, I think it is fine once in a while to give some direction.

Raising Hands

Another form we see in Scripture is lifting the hands. Lifting your hands in praise has nothing whatsoever to do with charismatic or non-charismatic. Nor is it an issue of culture or tradition. It is an issue of obeying God's Word.

Psalms 134:2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord.

Psalms 63:4 in your name I will lift up my hands.

Jesus lifted His hands in prayer and in blessing. Lifting your hands to God in worship can have a number of benefits. It can be a way saying, "Lord, we are offering all this praise to YOU. Receive it. Be pleased by it." It can be a way of saying, "*This* part of the song right here, God, *this* part right here - that's what I really want to say to You right now. That's the part that's especially delightful to me to sing to You right now."

Dancing

Psalms 150:3 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, 4 praise him with tambourine and dancing

Psalms 149:3 Let them praise his name with dancing

This is a hard one for me, because I can't dance. I would praise God that way if I could, but I am not capable of moving my body to rhythm. The way I deal with my conscience in Psalm 150 is by realizing that Psalm 150 calls us to praise with both the trumpet and dancing. I don't think God expects everyone to play the trumpet. So I figure it means those of us who can play the trumpet do that, and the ones who can dance do that.

It is not a good thing that our church culture is set up such that if anyone started busting some moves during the praise service, people would think of it as a distraction. That is bad. I don't know how to change that, but if we can figure a way to change it, we should. And in the mean time, just know that praising God by moving your body to the music is a very good thing.

Physical Expressions in General

Different physical expressions are more fitting for various different people, but if you are never moved to lift your hands to God, never stirred in your soul enough sing and shout for joy, never moved

to stand, to kneel, to lift your face to heaven, to bow in humility; if there is not enough joy in your heart to move your body, your praise has a long way to go.

Are God's blessings on your life restricted to the spiritual realm? Don't His expressions of love bless your entire being? Doesn't part of your enjoyment of Him include physical pleasures and comforts and benefits enjoyed by your body? So if God blesses your entire being why shouldn't your entire being be involved in the response of praise? Have your hands been left out of God's blessing? Has your mouth been deprived of God's kindness? Then why should they not involve themselves in thanksgiving and praise? God is worthy to be praised – out loud, and demonstrably; not just inwardly and silently. Are we dumb, that we can only praise internally? Are we paralyzed, that we cannot lift our hands? The people around us see us receive God's blessings with their eyes, let them also hear His praises with their ears. Why should they witness unpraised blessing? Offer your body to Him as part of your worship, as a living sacrifice.

And do it not just for God, and not just for your own heart, but do it also for the benefit of the saints around you. *Seeing* you worship will help us worship. Then you will see us worshipping and you will be caught up in that and we can build on one another's worship like the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders.

So let's worship beyond words - beyond lyrics, beyond pronouns, beyond music. With all of our hearts, all our souls, all our bodies - all that is within us, let's praise the Lord.

Benediction: 1 Timothy 6:15-16 God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Application Questions:

- 1) What obstacles stand between you and your ability to respond to hard providence with eruptions of genuine, delighted praise? Which kinds of hard providence do you find it hardest to praise God for? What could you use as a reminder to help you remember this principle?**
- 2) What obstacles prevent you from having greater physical expression in your worship? (Worrying about what others think? Tradition/upbringing? Personality type? Lack of love for God? Lack of ability to delight in His attributes?)**