



WORSHIP ONLY WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE IT

Do you ever feel like worship is done in faith? Your mind is somewhere else. You are depressed or pre-occupied. But, you are standing in church, the music has begun, and you're supposed to worship. So, you obey and sing.

Have you ever heard someone say, "worship the Lord even if you don't feel like it."? Sorry, but they're wrong! Wait! Before you burn me at the stake as a heretic, hear me out. I am not saying that we only worship when life is good. I am talking about the very nature of worship itself.

In Amos 5:23, God said, "Take away from me the noise of your songs, I will not even listen to the sound of your harps." The fact that we could sing and be ignored by God is a sobering thought. To clarify this, Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah when he said, "this people honors me with their lips but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship me". (Matthew 15:8)

Some might look for an outward expression, but God looks for what is unseen. It's not enough to "just do it". There are moments when it is better NOT to do it. "When could THAT be?", you might ask.

Consider this: If God is the audience of one, then worship is to be done on his terms. Worship is for, to, and solely about the person of God himself.

Let's be honest. Sometimes we don't feel like worshipping. It's not the beauty and greatness of God that is at fault. The problem lies in our weakened sense of affection toward God. So, what do we do about it? Well, as human beings, our emotions are directly influenced by what we believe. It logically follows that we can change our emotional state, our "hearts", by changing our thought processes.

While there are many tasks we can do honestly, even when we don't feel like it, worship is not one of them! Worship cannot be done on auto pilot! Worship must be done intentionally with our hearts. Anything less is simply not worship.

As worshipers, it is better to postpone - or even cease - singing until we have honestly centered our thoughts on God. It takes discipline to block all distractions out, but it is absolutely necessary for true worship to take place. When struggling to worship from the heart, we can recall scripture that talks about who God is, speaking the truth of God's Word out loud or forming it into a prayer. We can persevere in this until a genuine sense of gratitude, peace, hope, or joy enters our hearts. At that point, we are ready to express worship to God. This must be carried through the whole worship event, as we pay attention to the words coming out of our mouths, resisting the urge to go into "auto pilot".

We could be in a stadium full of people making noise and even singing songs with exuberance but, it is only when our hearts - mind and emotion - are engaged that it is truly "worship in spirit and in truth". (John 4:23, 24)