



## Emotion or Devotion?

(Psalms 100:4) “*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.*” This is just one scripture that speaks of the devoted worshipper giving thanks to the Lord in the congregation. The word thanksgiving used in this Psalm comes from the root word in the Old Testament meaning, “properly an *extension* of the hand, that is, (by implication) *avowal*, or (usually) *adoration*; specifically a *choir* of worshippers: - confession, (sacrifice of) praise, thanks (-giving, offering).”

Have you have had such good news that you raised your hands in total glee? When the Cardinals won the World Series there were a lot of Missourians raising their hands, clapping and shouting over the victory out of pure joy that the contest was won by our team. Joyful exuberance filled the stands as the fans shared in the Cardinals victory. This display of joy was uninhibited, spontaneous, and many of the people stayed around awhile after the victory to soak in the moment for awhile. Some fans were more excited than others, but everyone showed their devotion to their team in one way or another. Good news has that effect on people. Devotion led to an emotional response by the Cardinals fans.

I recognize that some people do not see the real purpose or cause of devotional and emotional praise and worship. Yes, I said devotional and emotional worship! When pure devotion is the basis for us to raise or clap our hands, during praise and worship, the emotion of the worshipper is bound to be affected. The Bible tells us that God inhabits the praises of His people. Psalm 22:3 “*But thou art holy, O thou that inhabits the praises of Israel.*” As we mediate on the fact that we have God living inside of us, and that God inhabits our praises when we come to Him with perfect hearts, our whole being is impacted by His Wondrous Presence.

The key to true worship is a perfect heart. It is not in perfect voices, or impeccable performances by the musicians, choirs, worship leaders or the congregation that is pleasing to God. But is a heart of wanting to please Him with our offering of thanksgiving. I believe when the Holy Spirit sees hearts that are in love with God and not afraid to show it, that His Presence begins to surround the worshippers and true adoration of God is the result.

I can imagine the emotion of Palm Sunday with the people crying out Hosanna, Lord save us, but it is apparent that for many of those people that this was more emotion than devotion. They wanted a King on Earth instead of a King in Heaven. When the persecution of Jesus began, they ran away instead of remaining devoted to Him.

Sometimes in life we all experience less than joyful situations. But these situations should not dampen our devotion to God or our praises to His Name. It may be difficult to rise up from under attacks and the onslaughts of daily life, but when we love God with all of hearts, we have the confidence that He is still on our side, and worthy to be praised. (Ephesians 5:19-21) “*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.*” The melodies of praise and worship begin in our hearts, and not on the instruments accompanying our heartfelt praise. Col 3:16 “*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*



Don't forget that we have a Powerful Advocate called along side of us to help us at all times. The following scripture gives us hope and determination to continue in Christ. The Holy Spirit is praying for you right now even as you read this letter. Jesus, our Great High Priest is praying for us now as well. Don't doubt it, but believe it because, "IT IS WRITTEN", in the Word of God.

(Romans 8:23-39) *"And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Some may come into our midst and think that we were too emotional, but if our hearts are in the right place, and our praise and worship is true devotion, the Holy Spirit will fall on them in a very special way as God inhabits our praises and allows them for the first time to be touched by His Holy Presence.

Praise and worship is only part of our walk with the Lord, but it is essential that we have clean, thankful hearts before Him when we enter His Gates and Courts with praise, and we need to be sure our hearts are clean before Him in every aspect of our service to Him. (Heb 13:15) *"Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."* This Sunday let us, *"Enter His Gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name."*

Pastor Vince