

## WORSHIP AS FEASTING, AND WORSHIP AS FAINTING

Bruce A. Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

I. Introduction: What kind of worship do the people of God carry out as they come together to a given Sunday corporate worship service?

II. Worship as Feasting – E.g., Psalm 4; 18; 30; 40:1-10; 84; 63 (part); 116

Psalm 40:1-10 – For the choir director. A Psalm of David. <sup>1</sup> I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup> He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. <sup>3</sup> He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD. <sup>4</sup> How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. <sup>5</sup> Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count. <sup>6</sup> Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. <sup>8</sup> I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.” <sup>9</sup> I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation; Behold, I will not restrain my lips, O LORD, You know. <sup>10</sup> I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your steadfast love and Your truth from the great congregation.

- Past experience(s) in mind (40:1-3a)
- Severe distress—“pit of destruction” and “miry clay” (40:2)
- He looked to God alone, not to others, and certainly not to the proud (40:1, 4-5)
- God’s faithfulness, power, and mercy to hear his cry and bring deliverance (40:1-2)
- God is exclusively and incomparably the true and gracious God (40:5-6)
- He trusted God in his distress with a delight to belong to God and to obey his word (40:6-8)
- His distress, followed by God’s merciful deliverance, resulted in his public song and praise (40:3-4, 9-10)

### III. Worship as Fainting – E.g., Psalm 3; 6; 13; 40:11-17; 42; 63 (part); 130

Psalm 40:11-17 – <sup>11</sup> You, O LORD, will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your steadfast love and Your truth will continually preserve me. <sup>12</sup> For evils beyond number have surrounded me; My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see; They are more numerous than the hairs of my head, and my heart has failed me. <sup>13</sup> Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; Make haste, O LORD, to help me. <sup>14</sup> Let those be ashamed and humiliated together Who seek my life to destroy it; Let those be turned back and dishonored Who delight in my hurt. <sup>15</sup> Let those be appalled because of their shame Who say to me, “Aha, aha!” <sup>16</sup> Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let those who love Your salvation say continually, “The LORD be magnified!” <sup>17</sup> Since I am afflicted and needy, Let the Lord be mindful of me. You are my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God.

- At the beginning and ending of his cry for deliverance, he expresses his resolute, determined, uncompromising confidence and trust in the covenant faithfulness and mercy of God (40:11, 17)
- Severe distress—“evils beyond number,” “my iniquities have overtaken me,” “I am not able to see,” “more numerous than the hairs of my head,” and “my heart has failed me” (40:12); others “seek my life to destroy it” and they “delight in my hurt” (40:14); “I am afflicted and needy” (40:17)
- In his distress, he looks to God alone to deliver him (40:13, 16-17) for with the Lord alone is “compassion,” “steadfast love,” “truth” (40:1), “salvation,” “help” and deliverance from God who is mindful of his deep need (40:16-17)
- He expresses his longing for the wicked not to prevail over him and to receive instead justice from God (40:14-15)
- He pledges from himself, and calls others to proclaim, “The LORD be magnified!” (40:16) expressing that all praise ultimately is owing to God alone.

IV. Conclusion: Worship as Feasting and Worship as Fainting are worship precisely because in both *God alone is the object of the worshiper’s only ultimate hope and trust*. May we see him alone as both Great and Good, as the God of indomitable power and intimate care. May our hope never waver, our faith never falter, because our vision of the beauty of his character compels us always to look to him alone for all that we need. For his glory and our good, may it be so.