

# Our Attitude *in the* HOUSE OF GOD



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## OUR ATTITUDE IN THE HOUSE GOD

*One thing that I long for  
Is to dwell in Thy house  
One thing that I ask for  
Is to enjoy Thy temple, oh God*

*Refrain:*

*It is better one day in Thy courts  
Than a thousand days elsewhere  
To praise Thee, to worship Thee  
Who art the living God  
And to enjoy all Thy mercy.*

I am sure quite a lot of us are familiar with the song above. The first sentence of the chorus, "It is better one day in Thy courts, than a thousand days elsewhere," is taken from the book of Psalms:

***For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*** *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Psalm 84:10*

The question is, why did the Psalmist say that "*For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand*" (elsewhere)?

Why was it that for the Psalmist one day in the house of God, even just to be in its court or in its doorway was better than a thousand days elsewhere? Was it because in those days there was no other beautiful place than the court of the house of God? Or was there no other place that was more attractive?

Or, was the sentence just a figure of speech?

The Psalmist spoke literally, not figuratively, because he gave his explanation in Psalm 93:

*Psalm 93:1 The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. 2 Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting. 3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. 4 The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.*

*5 Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.*

Psalm 93 is a chapter that explains about cause and effect, of which verses 1-4 as the cause and verse 5 as the effect.

**Cause:** The Lord is the everlasting King that is even more powerful than huge ocean waves,

**The effect:** God's testimonies are very sure and God's house deserves to be treated in holiness for ever, not for a period or at certain times only, but all the time because God is forever King from eternity to eternity.

A house or palace of a king is a symbol of his greatness. That is why one thing that made the Queen of Sheba marveled at the greatness of King Solomon was the house/palace that he built.

*1 Kings 10:4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, 5 and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.*

David became confident that God had established him as king over the nation of Israel when a palace was built for him.

*2 Sam 5:11 And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house. 12 And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.*

Likewise, if we have the opportunity to visit the royal palaces of Europe (for example when we go there for a tour), then we will see the link between the greatness of a king and his palace. That is why the State Palace is a favorite place to visit, especially when it is the palace of a king or a president who is still in power.

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to listen to the sermon of a senior pastor who was one of the Christian leaders in Indonesia. He said that while doing his ministry, he has served in dozens of countries, but the most memorable visit for him was when he was invited by President Bill Clinton for breakfast at the White House. Why was that breakfast together event so special to him? Was it because the breakfast menu at the White House was excellent and complete? No. If it was because of the quality of the menu for the breakfast, many other hotels provided better and more complete menus.

Then why was that breakfast event so special compared to his services or visits to other countries or places? The answer was because he was invited by Bill Clinton to the White House. Why was being invited by Bill Clinton considered so special? Because at that time Bill Clinton was the President of the United States-- a super power country in the world. Meaning that if he is invited by Bill Clinton now, he may not feel as proudly honored as then, since Bill Clinton is not serving as president of the U.S. any more.

He also felt proud because he was invited to the White House, the home/castle or place from where the president of the most powerful country in the world executed his administration.

From the above explanation, we understand why the Psalmist said that one day in the courts of the house of God, in the house of the King of Kings, is far better than a thousand years anywhere else.

Do we feel the same with the Psalmist when we go to the house of God?

Back to Psalm 93:5 above "*Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.*"

Every time we enter or are present in a church which is God's house, do we behave properly because we realize that we are entering the house of the most glorious God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the King of kings?

If we observe and compare our attitude when we go to church and the attitude of other people when they go to their place of worship, we will see how far the differences are. There are congregations of other beliefs that require their followers to take off their footwear before they enter their place of worship--and some even had to get cleaned up beforehand. There are other religions that require their people to dress up in certain outfits before they may enter their place of worship. Some other beliefs even require their followers to walk on bent knees while crouching over to enter places they consider sacred.

With what attitude do we enter our place of worship?

Some come to church with indecent clothes. There was a young man who came to church wearing three-quarter pants, T-shirt without collar and sandals. Where are we going? Are we going to the beach?

Many people assume that because we are saved by grace, we may act at will in worship. There are also people who think that because God is merciful, He must be easy going and so we may act and behave however we want to in church, for our merciful God will surely forgive.

We find many congregation members chat, eat and drink, send blackberry messages, texting and even playing iPad games or busy using their cell phones while they are in a place of worship.

If we read Isaiah 1:10-15:

*Isa 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.*

*11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.*

*12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?*

*13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.*

*14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.*

*15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*

Verse 10:

*Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah!*

This verse explains that these words apply equally to the leaders/rulers (of Sodom), and the people (of Gomorrah). We know that God viewed Sodom and Gomorrah as being equal, meaning that the Word does not make exceptions for the people or for the leaders.

Verse 11:

*11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.*

This verse explains that God was fed up with burnt offerings, because actually it was not burnt offerings that God wanted and prioritized.

Verse 12:

*12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?*

Verse 12 states, *When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand?*" This verse explains that not always our presence before God pleases Him, not all our church attendance pleases God. When our coming to the house of God is *"to tread my courts"* or to *"run... in and out of my Temple's rooms"* (NCV),\* (which means that when our coming defiles the temple of God because we behave improperly in His house), God says, what did we come for? Because God never demanded and expected the coming of this kind of people.

(\*)New Century Version Bible

Verse 13:

*13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.*

*"Bring no more vain oblations;"* do not praise God anymore, if it is not done earnestly, if it is performed while chewing candies, drinking, chatting, and expressing other improper attitudes. No need to give offerings either, if we actually are not willing and intend that act of giving to be a show off.

*"Incense is an **abomination unto me**;"*

The word "abomination unto me" is only found in this verse and not found in other parts of the Bible. This phrase portrayed God's great wrath that even exceeded His wrath towards idol worshippers that He detested.

Let us compare it with some verses relating to idolatry:

*Hos 9:10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time:but they went to Baal-peor, and separated*

themselves unto that shame; and their **abominations** were according as they loved.

*Psalm 107:39 Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. 40 He poureth **contempt** upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.*

In Isaiah 1:13 (2011 Expanded Bible) it is written:

*13 Don't continue bringing me ·worthless [meaningless; futile] sacrifices! ·**I hate** the incense you burn [Incense is detestable/an abomination to me]. **I can't stand** your New Moons, Sabbaths, and ·other feast days [convocations; sacred assemblies]; I can't ·stand [endure] ·the evil you do in your holy meetings [sin and assembly].*

In this Expanded Bible the phrase "I hate and cannot stand" is also only found in this verse.

Why was God so angry at people who entered God's house improperly, exceeding His wrath to the idol worshippers?

In the case of idolatry, those people preferred to worship idols which were not God, instead of worshiping God the Creator of the universe.

Whereas the case of those who entered into the house of God in unworthy manners is similar as, for example, when I come to your house and I do things that are not appropriate in your house, what would that mean? Would not that mean that I am insulting you as the host or home owner?

Similarly, when we enter the house of God in inappropriate manners and attitudes, we are actually insulting God as the owner of the house.

The verse continues to state, "*the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.*

Why could not God stand the sight of our celebration and worship? The celebrations were full of iniquity. What kind of iniquity? Improper behavior and untrue worship.



Every time we worship or celebrate, we think that we do it for the glory of God. But often times what actually happens is the opposite: we insult God through our worship and celebration. In what ways do we insult Him? We insult God because we enter His house with inappropriate appearance and attitude. We insult God with our inappropriate attitude and behavior in the house of God. Often times, there are even congregation members and ministers who eat and drink while the Word of God is being delivered.

Who are we to feel that we have the right and hence dare to eat and drink and behave carelessly before the Lord?

Let us compare ourselves with John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was someone whom the Lord Jesus himself said that *"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* Matthew 11:11

From the verse, Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest man ever born into this world.

But when John the Baptist who was the greatest man ever born into this world was questioned about the Lord Jesus, he stated: *"There cometh one mightier than I after me, **the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.**"* Mark 1:7

If the greatest man ever born felt "the latchet of (His) shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose," then with what right do we feel worthy that we dare to act inappropriately in the presence of God in His house?

Verse 14:

*14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.*

Verse 14 is a partial repetition of verse 13. This shows that God wants to restate the things He hates.

Verse 15:

*15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*

In verse 15 the Lord pronounces His punishment to those who enters the house of God with inappropriate attitudes.

Since 2003 I have been trying to find out why God was so good to me although I was not a good and holy man, I was no better than most people, and in several aspects, I might even be worse than most people. When I contemplated about that I got confused with the condition of some ministers, activists and children of God that were very pitiful, not only economically but also in terms of family, health and other things. My logical thought at that time said that those who serve God should be well taken care of and blessed with abundance, but what I saw was just how much trouble they were twisted in. I even saw many ministers or activists who increasingly served, but got into even more a lot of trouble. Only after reading Isaiah 1:10-15 did I understand why they were not blessed.

Many activists and ministers who have often come to church no longer deem the worship place as a worship place, a church, the house of God the eternal King. So, often times the worship place, the house of God is not considered and treated as a sacred place but instead it has been regarded as a general and public place. They eat and drink, run around, scream and do other activities that should not be done in the house of God. The last paragraph explains that this is the reason that our prayers were never answered by the Lord, because let alone answered, they were not even heard. When our prayers are never heard by God, how can we be blessed?

Therefore we need to do self-introspection:

- What is our understanding of worship in church? Do we see going to church as merely going into a building to meet friends, sing, hear praise songs, listen to a sermon, pray, give offering then go home? Or is each one of us thankful

because we are made worthy to appear in the presence of God in the house of God.

- What is our understanding of praising God? Do we praise God in church simply to follow the church rituals or to give thanks to God every time we are allowed to praise His great name?
- What is our attitude when we hear a sermon? Do we deem sermons as mere church ritual and expect a hilarious sermon that can be entertaining? Or do we believe that the sermon preached is the word of God that we must listen to earnestly without eliminating the discerning spirit to be able to distinguish whether it is delivered in accordance with the truth.
- What is our attitude when praying? Is prayer just human speech or do we believe there is power in each prayer uttered?

The above notions will shape our attitudes. If we feel that coming to church is God's grace that makes us worthy to come before His presence, we will definitely dress well, and we will come early, we would not dare to talk and make noise in church, we will take time to quietly give thanks for the opportunity that God has given us to be able to come to His presence. We will pray that God would sanctify and make us worthy to praise His holy name. We will pray earnestly that God grants us wisdom so that we may understand what God wants to say to us through His servant. We would also praise God earnestly, listening to every prayer and agreeing with it. We would not dare to behave recklessly in the church and even in every aspect of our lives. Instead we would only behave as stated in Paul's letter to the Hebrews:

*Heb 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:*

The above verse explains that it is precisely because we receive the gift of salvation from God, that we should give thanks and worship God in a way that is pleasing to God--that is, with the attitude of respect and fear.