

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"The Joy of Worship"

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Phil. 2:17-18; Phil. 2:1-16; Phil. 1:25-26; Phil. 4:18; Num. 15:10-12; Num. 28:6-7; Rom. 12:1; Hab. 3:17-19

Most of us probably have certain moments that immediately come to mind when we hear the word *worship*. We think of singing, lifting our hands, closing our eyes, and experiencing the presence of the Lord. And there is good reason for that. There is joy in worship. There is joy in His presence. But sometimes we unintentionally shrink worship down until it simply means the part of a service when we sing. Scripture gives us a much bigger picture. Worship is not merely something that comes from our mouths; worship involves the totality of who we are. Sometimes the deepest worship does not happen while a song is playing. Sometimes it happens when life is difficult, when obedience costs us something, when we put another person before ourselves, and when we say, "Lord, even this belongs to You."

That is the picture Paul gives us in Phil. 2:17-18. He is imprisoned, the Philippians are experiencing their own suffering and opposition, and yet Paul looks at the whole situation through the language of worship. He writes, *"But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. The same way, you also—rejoice and share your joy with me!"* (Phil. 2:17-18). Paul is not rejoicing because suffering feels good. He is rejoicing because he can see what the suffering, service, sacrifice, and obedience become when they are surrendered to ADONAI: **worship**. His circumstances have not changed, but his perspective has. What looks like being emptied out from one perspective becomes a fragrant offering from another.

1. WORSHIP IS A LIFE BEING POURED OUT

Paul says, *"I am being poured out as a drink offering"* (Phil. 2:17). The imagery would have been immediately connected to the sacrificial worship of Israel. Alongside the primary sacrifice there could be a drink offering poured out before ADONAI. Num. 28:6-7 describes the regular burnt offering as *"a pleasing aroma, a fire offering to ADONAI,"* and then says, *"With each lamb pour out a fourth of a hin of fermented drink at the Sanctuary as a drink offering to ADONAI."* Paul takes that picture and applies it to his own life. His ministry, his service, his imprisonment, his suffering—and ultimately even his life—could all be poured out before the Lord as an offering. Being "poured out" does not necessarily mean martyrdom here. The larger idea is sacrifice: a life that says, "Lord, whatever I have and whatever I am, it belongs to You."

That changes how we understand worship. Worship certainly includes singing to the Lord, but it cannot end when the song ends. Paul is describing his present circumstances as part of his worship. Rom. 12 calls us to offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, and that means worship begins touching our schedules, relationships, resources, ambitions, disappointments, suffering, and obedience. Sometimes worship sounds like praise; sometimes worship looks like forgiving someone when you would rather hold on to the offense. Sometimes it looks like caring for somebody when you are tired, serving when nobody sees, giving sacrificially, or continuing faithfully when life has become difficult. The joy is not necessarily in the difficulty itself. The joy

comes in realizing, “Lord, even this can be offered to You. Even here, my life can become worship.”

2. WORSHIP SAYS, “YOU BEFORE ME”

There is something beautiful about the humility in Paul's picture. He does not make himself the primary sacrifice. The sacrifice and service of the Philippians' faith is pictured as the primary offering, and Paul describes himself as the drink offering being poured out alongside it. The sacrifice was primary; the drink offering accompanied it. In other words, Paul is not saying, “Look at everything I am suffering for you.” He places their sacrifice in the central position and his own circumstances alongside theirs. That fits perfectly with everything he has already been saying in this chapter: no selfish ambition, no pursuit of empty glory, no “me first,” but rather the mind of Messiah—putting others and their interests before our own. Even in talking about his suffering, Paul is still living out the humility he has just described.

And together, all of it becomes worship. Later Paul describes the gift the Philippians sent through Epaphroditus with the same sacrificial language: *“I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you sent—a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God”* (Phil. 4:18). Their giving was worship. Their faithfulness was worship. Their care for Paul was worship. His service toward them was worship. Their perseverance under pressure was worship. They were separated geographically—Paul suffering in imprisonment and the Philippians facing their struggle in Philippi—but before the Lord their sacrifices were being joined together into one fragrant offering. This is corporate worship in a much deeper sense than simply singing in the same room. It is the people of God living with the mind of Messiah, each one saying, “Not me first. You before me. And above all, Lord, You first.”

3. WORSHIP GIVES US A JOY WE CAN SHARE

After saying that he is being poured out alongside their sacrifice, Paul says, *“I rejoice and share my joy with you all”* (Phil. 2:17). Then he immediately turns it back toward them: *“The same way, you also—rejoice and share your joy with me!”* (Phil. 2:18). That is really striking because nothing about their circumstances sounds joyful. Paul is imprisoned. The Philippians are suffering. There has been pressure and conflict. Yet Paul's joy is not rooted in everything around him going the way he wants it to go. His joy comes from seeing ADONAI at work in the middle of it. He sees people developing the mind of Messiah. He sees them standing together. He sees their faith becoming visible. He sees their lives being poured out before the Lord, and it gives him confidence that he has not run or labored in vain. His eyes are fixed on what God is doing rather than merely on what circumstances are doing to him.

That is the kind of joy Habakkuk describes: *“Though the fig tree does not blossom, and there is no yield on the vines, though the olive crop fail, and the fields produce no food, the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no cattle in the stalls. Yet will I triumph in ADONAI, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation! ADONAI my Lord, is my strength”* (Hab. 3:17–19). This is not pretending difficulty is pleasant. Biblical joy is much deeper than a temporary feeling. There is a settledness to it—a perspective that says, “Even here, the Lord is still my salvation. Even here, He is still at work. Even here, my life can belong to Him.” And Paul does not keep that joy to himself. He shares his joy with them and calls them to share theirs with him. There is a beautiful mutuality here: what happens to me affects you, and what God is doing in you encourages me. We worship, sacrifice, persevere, and rejoice **together**.

CONCLUSION

The joy of worship is much bigger than the joy we may experience while singing a worship song. It is the joy of looking at the totality of our lives and realizing that everything surrendered to ADONAI can become an offering to Him. Paul could look at chains and see a drink offering. He could look at the Philippians' suffering, service, giving, and faith and see a sacrifice. Together, it became a fragrant offering to the Lord. That is why he could rejoice. His joy was not dependent upon escaping the difficulty; it was rooted in knowing that even within the difficulty, Messiah was being formed in His people and their lives were becoming worship.

So perhaps the question before us is not simply, "Am I worshipping?" but, **"What part of my life have I not yet allowed to become worship?"** Maybe there is an area where we have been grumbling instead of surrendering, protecting ourselves instead of putting another person first, or simply asking the Lord to remove something when He desires to meet us within it. Today, let's bring the totality of who we are before Him. Bring the struggle. Bring the weariness. Bring the disappointment. Bring the plans, the relationships, the resources, the service, and even the suffering. We do not rejoice because pain is good; we rejoice because nothing surrendered to Yeshua has to be wasted. Let this become your prayer: "ADONAI, pour my life out however You desire. Give me the mind of Messiah. Let what I offer You become a fragrant aroma, pleasing to You. And teach me to find joy in knowing that my whole life can be worship."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Phil. 2:17, what does Paul's picture of being "poured out as a drink offering" teach us about the meaning of worship?
2. Why is it significant that Paul pictures the Philippians' sacrifice as primary and himself as the accompanying drink offering? What does that reveal about the "you-before-me" mind of Messiah?
3. Where have you unintentionally limited worship mainly to singing, congregational services, or other explicitly spiritual activities? What ordinary part of your life could become an act of worship to ADONAI?
4. Is there a circumstance in your life right now that has produced grumbling, frustration, or weariness? How might your perspective change if you began asking, "Lord, how can even this be offered to You?"
5. Paul tells the Philippians not only to rejoice but to "share your joy" with one another. Who could you intentionally encourage this week by sharing something you see ADONAI doing in the middle of difficulty?

Closing Prayer

ADONAI, thank You that worship is not limited to a song, a place, or a moment. You invite us to offer the totality of who we are to You. Give us the mind of Messiah Yeshua—the humility to put others before ourselves and the willingness to be poured out in service to You. When circumstances are difficult, keep our eyes fixed on You. Help us not to rejoice in suffering itself, but to rejoice in knowing that You are present, You are working, and nothing surrendered to You is wasted. Let our lives—our service, our giving, our relationships, our obedience, and our struggles—become a fragrant aroma before You. Fill us with the joy that comes from Your presence, and teach us to share that joy with one another as we worship You together.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.