



Gospel Worship: Church Practices Series

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Gospel Worship

Introduction

The intention of this lesson is to answer the following questions: What is Biblical Worship in the gathered assembly? What are the Scriptural barriers we must practice this worship within?

The leadership of this church believes this topic to be absolutely essential to laying a foundation to our practices. From cover to cover of the Bible, we see worship as a central theme. We believe that we are saved to be worshippers of God. Thus, it is absolutely essential that we understand worship and what boundaries God gives to our worship.

Furthermore, there have never been more churches in the history of this country and probably never less worship. What will take place in this country this morning under the guise of worship should absolutely break our hearts. We have come to believe that worship is the state of the art versus the state of the heart. A. W. Tozer has said, "the church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshipping men." It is absolutely essential that we know our God in truth and worship Him in a manner that He is so worthy of. Let us be blown away with whom God is and that through Christ we can draw near to worship our Majestic God clothed in righteousness. We must worship God aright. I have heard of more testimonies of people who have been drawn to seek out Christ after being amazed by being in the presence of God's people truly worshipping Him.

However, I am afraid that while there is more talk about worshipping God in the church today than ever, it is nothing more than what Christ said to the Pharisees:

Matthew 15:8 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. 9 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.' "

There is much singing but little worship. I came across an illustration by John MacArthur that I think really sums up what I am saying:

"A number of years ago I read a newspaper account of a christening party in a wealthy Boston suburb. The parents had opened their palatial home to friends and relatives, who had come to celebrate the wonderful event. As the party was moving along and the people were having a wonderful time eating and drinking and celebrating the event, somebody said, "By the way, where is the baby?" The heart of that mother jumped, and she instantly left the room and rushed into the master bedroom, where she had left the baby asleep in the middle of the massive bed. The baby was dead, smothered by the coats of the guests. I've often thought about that in reference to how the Lord Jesus Christ is treated in His own church.

We are busy supposedly celebrating him, while He is smothered by the coats of the guests."

We have many activities and little worship. We are big on ministry and small on adoration. We want to do ministry without doing that for which God called us to. We are to be Christian hedonists who delight and desire to give our great God worship. What an incredible blessing that we can draw near and exalt our God together in the public assembling on Sunday mornings. I pray that your heart is joyful and prepared and reverent for what we are called to do corporately this morning. So let us examine this great idea of worship.

Worship Defined

The New Testament uses several words for worship. Two of them are particularly noteworthy. The first is "proskuneo," a commonly used term that literally means, "to kiss toward," "to kiss the hand," or "to bow down." It is the word for worship used to signify humble adoration. The second word is "latreuo," which suggests "rendering honor," or "paying homage."

Both terms carry the idea of giving, because worship is giving something to God. Worship is ascribing to God His worth or stating and affirming His supreme value. Sadly enough, most talk about worship today is what it does for us or how it makes us feel. While there is no greater joy or delight than to worship God, that is not why we worship God. We worship God because He is God!

Stephen Charnock has captured this idea well when he wrote, "When we believe that we should be satisfied rather than God glorified in our worship, it brings the idea that God was made for us, rather than us made for Him."

Jeremiah Burroughs has defined worship as follows; "Worship is the coming and giving homage and service unto Him that is due from us as creatures unto the Creator. It is to give the respect that we owe to God."

Thus, we see that the gathered saints are to come and give reverence and adoration to the God whom they love supremely with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength. It must be our high privilege and delight to worship and adore our God.

Importance of Worship

Worship is the constant activity in heaven

In the book of Revelation, it becomes clear that what we will do for all of eternity is worship God. When we see Him as He really is and fully understand our great salvation, we will give Him praise and adoration for the rest of eternity. To the unbeliever this sounds boring, but to the children of God, this is the sweetest truth we know. Our only

regret is that because of our remaining corruption, we do not worship God now the way we will worship Him then. However, it is clear that worship will be the constant activity in heaven. Thus we see how important worship is to God.

Worship is the chief activity of the church on earth

John 4:23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

We are saved to be worshippers of God. The end of evangelism is to make worshippers of God. God saves people to become worshippers of Him. We are to do that which we were created for, worship God.

Worship is a central theme throughout the Bible

It is truly amazing when you consider that God's Word devotes two chapters to the creation story and fifty focus on the tabernacle. God took six days for creation and spent forty days with Moses in directing him to make the tabernacle. We understand this because God made the world for Him to be worshipped through His plan of redemption. In Scripture, we see God directing us with what is acceptable and what is unacceptable worship as early as Genesis 4.

Worship is the focus of the first two commandments

The first commandment dealt with who we are to worship and the second commandment dealt with the manner in which we are to worship.

Worship Explained

Worship Removed

Since the fall in the garden, man has been separated from God. There is an enmity that separates us and as a result, worship is impossible. We have exchanged the glory of God and now worship the creation versus the Creator. Man by nature is a hater of God and a lover of self. This is the dreadful state that we are all born into.

- Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.
- Romans 8:7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so;
- Romans 1:30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

- Colossians 1:21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,
- Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
- Psalm 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth. 4 They have venom like the venom of a serpent; Like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear,

As a result, we see throughout the Old Testament that the Israelites were aware of the fact that no one could come into the presence of God. They could not come near to God. The high priest could come into the holy of holies one time a year on the Day of Atonement and make his offering and get out. It was an extremely fearful and terrifying thing.

Worship Restored

Romans 5:1 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

All that we lost in Adam (peace, access, hope, purity, etc.), Jesus gives back in the Gospel. There is a way to have peace between God and sinful man. There is a way to be reconciled.

Colossians 1:20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Christ is the remover of enmity! He is the prince of peace! He satisfied God's justice, subdued our hearts to God, united us to Himself and is now our Advocate with the Father. The result of Christ's work for us now is very clear:

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Do not let this get by you. Where once we were enemies and separated from God, now we can draw near with confidence because of the work of Christ. I believe this is the most central truth we must keep before us as we come to worship. We must be stunned and overwhelmed with what this truth really means and ascribe worship to our God who made a way of reconciliation. We must come with full confidence that Christ is a

sufficient atonement and that now we can come right into the true holy of holies, the throne room of heaven and give God our praise and worship.

Do you see how this truth must dictate our worship? What does this say to the one that is singing and looking around and noticing what everyone is doing and wearing? What does this say to the one who cannot get his mind off of work while he is in the gathered assembly? What does this say to the one who is thinking about where he is going to go to lunch when the service is over? What does this say to the one whose mind is thinking about a football game to be played later on that day? Brethren, we must get lost in the truth of Christ and that we have peace with an infinitely holy God, and worship Him with full voices and full hearts. I wonder what God thinks of much of our so-called "worship?"

Worship Required

John 4:23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

To understand worship, we must begin with the fact that "God is spirit." What this means is that God does not possess bodily parts or passions; He is composed of no material elements. He is not to be apprehended as the object of any of our bodily senses.

1 Corinthians 2:11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man.

Therefore, God desires that we worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Let us examine then what this means.

Our worship must be rational

We must worship God in truth. This is teaching us that there must be an engaging of the mind in our worship. We are not to shut our minds off in our worship and just "feel" as much of contemporary Christendom teaches. We live in the day of "glandular Christianity." People pick a church on how it feels. People judge worship based on how it feels. Yet true worship involves concentration. We can't worship without thinking. Consider the following:

MIND (stirs) AFFECTIONS (activates) WILL = (obedience)

If we are to have our affections stirred as we worship our great God, it must not come from just "feelings" but rather by an engaged mind. We must come to worship with our minds focused upon God, man, Christ. We must be meditating and amazed at the truth of reconciliation and having peace with God. It is only our thoughts of God that will overflow our hearts with worship. That is why it is essential that we study the Scriptures and grow in our understanding of who God is. I recommend spending time in the Psalms before coming to church and confessing sin so that your mind will be prepared to worship God.

Furthermore, a tired mind will not cut it either. We must retire early on Saturday nights if we are going to be fresh for our worship. Wait a minute. If we are to do this, aren't we making our whole lives revolve around our worship of God? Exactly. We are saved and exist to worship and glorify God, not ourselves. We must come to worship like David and say, "I was so glad when they said unto me let us go to the house of the Lord."

So we must engage our minds in our worship. Concentrate on the words that you are singing. Understand that through Christ we are bringing our praises right into the throne room of heaven. We are not spectators. We cannot be passive in our worship. The offertory is not "half-time." We must engage our minds and hearts and be active in our worship.

Our worship must be with reality

We are also to worship God in "spirit." A Christian mind without a heart is wrong. We are to think rightly and feel deeply as we worship. We must desire to worship God from the core of our being. We must be able to cry out with the psalmist:

Psalm 27:4 One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to meditate in His temple.

When we corporately come to worship God we are to do it with all the strength of our soul. I really do believe that we are missing out on the fullness of what worship should be. We have such low thoughts of God that we are not ascribing to Him the worship that is due His name. That name that is above every name! Oh how we who have been enlightened and enraptured to Christ should worship God. It is essential that we worship God with our whole hearts. God is not concerned about the motions, but the heart. It is not enough to come to church and say, "I worshipped God." We must worship God with our whole hearts. Let me show you from Scripture how essential and important this is to God.

- Genesis 4:1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the

LORD." 2 And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4 And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

- Isaiah 1:11 "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, And the fat of fed cattle. And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. 12 "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? 13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies – I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. 14 "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them.
- Hosea 6:4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud, And like the dew which goes away early. 5 Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And the judgments on you are like the light that goes forth. 6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
- Amos 5:21 "I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.
- Malachi 1:6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?" says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Thy name?' 7 "You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled Thee?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.' 8 "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. 9 "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. 10 "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you.
- Matthew 15:8 **'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. 9 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'** "

These are just a few verses on the subject, but I think you get the idea. God is not pleased with just the motions. I ask that we as a church examine our hearts and confess to God

how much of our worship has been nothing more than singing songs. How little we have truly exalted Him and lifted up His name the way that is so deserving in this assembly. If we do not come here and worship God in spirit and in truth, it would be better for us to close the doors. Since we are God's people, let us worship God like His people!

Psalm 150:1 Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. 2 Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. 3 Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. 4 Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. 5 Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals.