

REFORMED WORSHIP

Worship That Is According To Scripture

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(this lesson summarizes this booklet)

Various “styles” of worship today – seeker-friendly, charismatic, contemporary, traditional, revivalistic, liturgical, etc

- Why do we at CCP worship the way we do?
- Does the Bible outline a correct way to worship God?
- Or is whatever we come up with permissible as long as we are sincere?
- The Reformed Faith believes that worship of God must be both sincere and done correctly
- The Regulative Principle of Worship – worship must be in accordance with God’s revealed will in Scripture

Clarifying points – what does the Regulative Principle of Worship apply to?

- Public not private worship
- Narrow sense of the word not broad sense
- Public worship, not evangelism, or other things God’s people may gather together to do – small grp bible studies, fellowship, business meetings...

General principle held by the Reformed Faith

- Christian public worship of God should transcend cultures and generations
 - The mindset has become very wide spread in the modern church that every age group, culture and subculture has to have its own style and method of worship. If they can’t worship God according to their own tastes, then supposedly it won’t be meaningful to them.
 - Eph 4:4-6 “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called into one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”
 - We should be able to connect with churches anywhere in their worship feel united to them when we worship together.

Text - John 4:19-24

1. Jesus is saying there is a correct and an incorrect way to worship God – he said there are “true” worshippers, implying “false” worshippers exists.

- The implication is that the Samaritans got it wrong.
 - The Jews had at least part of it right
 - There are those who are not true worshippers and there are reasons why they are not
2. The place of worship is no longer important – placing undue importance on the place of worship is not the correct way or attitude to have
 - Jerusalem in the OT was the correct place – time of “school master” of the law...
 - The Samaritans got this wrong
 - But Jesus said the place was no longer going to matter
 - We need to remember that as we move into our new building...
 3. Knowledge of God and his truth is necessary for both worship and salvation
 - Saving knowledge of God
 - We must listen to what God says about how HE wants to be worshipped if we want to please him
 4. How important is it to be a true worshipper?
 - Jesus says it is extremely important. So important that this is what God the Father is seeking.
 - The gospel goes forth to change sinners into true worshippers
 - 1 Peter 2:5, 9 – God saved us to worship Him! God seeks and wants true worshippers.
 5. Worship begins with God and is for God
 - Based upon who He is – God is Spirit
 - i. External/typological emphasis of the OT of necessity was only temporary
 - ii. Because God is spirit, acceptable worship must be done “in spirit” – we are meeting with the invisible God of the universe – we have to be sincere or He will see right through it
 - iii. Because God is spirit, acceptable worship must be done “in truth” or according to his truth which can only be revealed to us by this invisible God – we are of corrupt flesh and blood and therefore can not figure it out on our own
 - God is the one being Worship – it is for Him. Therefore it must be done in accordance with his revealed will.

John 4:22

“..true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth...”

John 4:24

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Worship in Spirit

1. Internal - of the heart – real or sincere, not going thru the motions

- Because God is spirit, he must be worshipped spiritually.
- OT system of worship - symbols and types pointed to Christ, but also taught spiritual truths.
 - i. Example: continual burning of incense in the temple represented the prayers of the saints
- Jesus is here emphasizing that the time of the “school master” of the law was coming to a close. It was time to put them aside and start doing what they pointed to – sincerely worship God from the heart, i.e. worship God in spirit.
- Worship was to no longer to be tied to a place that God would put his name in – we are now the temple of God – our bodies are the sanctuary where God dwells.
- “Don’t think that all one need do is place one’s body in the right building at the right time and where the right ritual is being performed.”

2. Simple

- NT worship is simple. It no longer has all the complex ordinances and requirements that the OT had.
- Focusing on spiritual realities instead multiple external forms leaves worship very simple.
- OT - there were long lists of things that had to be done in worship. The NT only has a handful of means grace that God’s people are to do when worshipping Him.

3. Reverent

- The spirit of worship is the spirit of reverence.
- It is never to be done with a light or frivolous attitude or manner.
- On one hand - the Bible is full of exhortations to rejoice in the Lord but on the other hand - to temper that joy with godly fear.
- Remember - you are meeting with the Almighty God of the Universe! Your seeking of Him must be sincere and humble.
- Spiritual worship is worship done with a humble frame of mind that is also coupled with faith and love.

Worship in Truth

Jesus is teaching us that for worship to be acceptable by God, being sincere (done in spirit) is not enough. It must also be done in truth – according to truth as revealed in Scriptures.

Today, the modern church emphasizes the attitude of worship (their def.: “sincere” and “full of the Spirit”) to the point of ignoring whether or not it is according to any Biblical pattern or not.

Worship in Truth – according to Scripture and filled with Scripture

I. Worship according to Scripture (worship in truth)

There are probably an unlimited number of ways in which one could devise to worship God. But Jesus said we have to get it right.

- “You worship what you do not know” vs. 22
- How are we going to know the invisible God and just how exactly He wants to be worshipped? What is acceptable worship to Him?
- God has to tell us – we have to listen to and submit to what He says.
- The God who is being worshipped is the one who determines what is acceptable worship - not the worshipper
- So our worship must be according to God’s revelation – The Bible.

Two basic understandings in historic Protestantism of worship

1. Normative Principle of Worship
2. Regulative Principle of Worship

Normative Principle – ‘general norms are given but whatever is not expressly forbidden by Scripture in worship is permitted’.

- This would leave the window very open...Examples...
- Lutheran and Anglican, (even Catholics follow this)... charismatics

Regulative Principle – ‘Whatever God commands or implies is permitted is only permitted.’

- Reformed denominations follow this (generally)
- Calvin – ‘lawful worship is that which He has established by Himself’. He rejected any mode of worship that is not sanctioned by the command of God.
- WFC, Chapter 21.1 – read in hymnal, pg 683

Where does the Bible teach the Regulative Principle? – Where does it teach the idea that we must be careful in our worship of Him to only do the things he has specifically told us to do, or by example or necessary implication has shown us is acceptable.

→ It is found throughout the whole Bible – is one of its general themes

1. Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3-8) – Abel’s offering - accepted by God, Cain’s was obviously not. We don’t know exactly what was wrong with it. Either his “spirit” was not right or something about the sacrifice itself or the way in which he offered it was wrong (it was not according to truth).
2. The Second Commandment (Exod 20:4) – God forbid worshipping Him through images. This was the major way that false gods were worshipped in that time period by society. God said “you don’t worship me the way everyone else worships their gods. I am a spirit so you can’t worship me that way.”
 - God was establishing the principle that only He can determine the way to worship Him – not society around us or other religions
3. The Golden Calf (Exod 32) – Notice - they were worshipping Yahweh through this idol. They weren’t trying to forsake God and worship someone else. It seems that the Israelites didn’t take seriously the 2nd commandment that they were just given. “Ah, God won’t mind if we worship Him this way”. But God made it very clear that He meant business by the punishment He gave.
4. Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10) – The sacrificial system of worship, which God had prescribed, had just got underway.
 - Background – chapter 8-9 –during their consecration into the priests office - “just as the LORD has commanded” - approx 14x
 - God makes a big spectacle at this first official worship event – God sent fire to consume the offering vs. 22-24
 - Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron who were just commissioned in the priest’s office, get excited and do something very stupid – did something that God had not commanded them to do in worship
 - Offered strange fire before the Lord” – God struck them dead on the spot.
 - They didn’t do something specifically that God had forbidden.
 - They simple didn’t offer incense He had prescribed.
 - It didn’t matter what their attitude was – they seemed very zealous.
 - God’s judgment on them stands as a perpetual testimony against those who presume to worship God by means which lack divine warrant.
 - “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” – were now all called priests of God!
5. Warning not to add or take away from God’s commands in the context of worship.

Deut 12:1-8 12:29-32
6. The rejection of Saul’s unprescribed worship (1 Sam 15:22). Twice Saul made mistakes in worshipping God and it cost him his kingdom.

- 1 Sam 13 – God instructed Saul through Samuel to wait from Samuel to offer sacrifices before going to war. But Saul got impatient and offered the sacrifices without him. Samuel said, “You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God...” context was worship.
 - 1 Sam 15 – God instructed Saul through Samuel when going to fight against the Amalekites to not spare anything, not even the cattle. Saul failed to do that and said that the people spared the best of the cattle to sacrifice to God. Samuel made it very clear that God would not accept that worship because he did not prescribe it. “To obey is better than sacrifice.”
7. The rejection of King Uzziah’s self-imposed worship in offering incense (2 Chron: 26)
- Uzziah was generally a good king, but he became proud.
 - He figured that since had been so successful that he had the right to march into the temple and offer incense – something only God had prescribed for the priest to do.
 - God struck him with leprosy for the rest of his life.
8. The Bible’s pronouncement of each successive King of Judah and Israel as either good or evil based upon whether they led God’s people to worship Him correctly or not.
- Built idols and worshipped under every green tree on every high hill
 - Tore down all the idols and all the groves on every high hill
9. Jesus rejected Pharisaic worship because they put their own traditions before the commands of God (truth). Plus their hearts (spirit) were not right either. Matt 15:9, Mark 7:6-7 (quotes from Isa 29:13)¹
- “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”
10. Jesus rejected the Samaritan worship since they worshipped what they did not know, and by implication in OT times worshipped in the wrong place and not in the prescribed way. John 4:22
- True worship for them (Samaritans) was impossible as long as they devised their own form of worship and not according to what God had clearly revealed in his Word.
11. The rejection of “will-worship” as Paul describes in Col 2:21-23.
- Some were coming up with self-made and self-imposed rules of self-denial as a way to worship God.
 - No doubt they were sincere but God had not prescribed these means and therefore they were unacceptable.

- They were a “self-made religion” or “will worship” – ie according to their own will, not God’s.

Basic doctrines of the Reformation imply the Regulative Principle

1. The Doctrines of God and Man

- Great gulf between the infinite God and finite man.
- Isa 55:8-9 – his thoughts are not our thoughts, his ways or not our ways – they are infinitely higher.
- Rom 11:33 – who has know the mind of the Lord?”
- Man can not know or figure out on his own how God wants to be worshipped unless God tells him – according to his reveal truth.

2. The Doctrine of Sin

- Total Depravity – emphasizes the extent the fall into sin has had on human nature – mind, will and affections corrupted
 - Eccl 9:3 – “The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil”
 - Jer 17:9 – “the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.”
- WCF – Adam’s posterity are “wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body” and “are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to evil.”
 - Rom 1:18-32 – Man is by nature an idolater.
 - Calvin – the human heart is a factory of idols.
- We are not competent to devise on our own God-honoring worship – we will get it wrong unless we listen to God’s reveal will.

3. The Doctrine of Scripture

- Sola Scriptura – our final authority in all matters of faith and conduct is Scripture – includes how to worship God
 - 2 Tim 3:16-17 – Scripture is complete and sufficient to instruct us in all things in life on how to please God – this includes worship. Nothing else needs to be added to it.

4. The Doctrine of the Church

- Reformed understanding of the Bible limits the church’s authority and power (as compared to the Roman Catholic tradition).
- The Church can not bind the consciences of men with things God has not insisted we do in worship.

5. The Doctrine of God’s Sovereignty

- God is sovereign over all things, including His worship.
- “He alone can rightly order his worship (we are finite and fallen)
- “He alone does order His worship through his Word
- “He is not obligated to accept whatever worship fallen man may devise

What are the elements God has ordained for NT worship?

Very Simple – Word, Sacrament, Prayer and Praise

- plus collection of offerings, oaths and vows (confession our faith), etc.

WCF 21: 3,5

The Bible does not specify the circumstances of worship but only the elements of worship. The only circumstance would the day – The Lord's Day.

- The circumstances of worship are left to Christian prudence and common sense.
- What time to meet... how long... what order ... how many scriptures to read or songs to sing... what topic or scripture to read or preach on...

Biblical worship is not only done according to Scripture, but...

II. Worship Filled with Scripture (worship in truth)

If worship is to God centered, it must be filled with a focus on his Word

- Read the Word
- Preach the Word
- Sing the Word
- Pray the Word
- Join the Sacraments with the Word

Pretty simple!

III. One more aspect of worshiping God in spirit and in truth...the Holy Spirit

- This is implied in the phrase Jesus used "in spirit"
- Reading, preaching, singing, and praying the Word without the Holy Spirit is fruitless – in will be vain.
- Both the Truth of God and the Spirit of God must be present for true worship to take place.
- We don't need anything else besides God's Truth and Spirit
 - We shouldn't try to interject anything else into the public worship of God
 - We don't need to devise new and exciting ways to worship Him, or get bored with what He as ordained for us.
 - **If we want to be sure He will bless our worship, then we need to make sure we only do what he has clearly promised in his Word to bless....why do anything else?!**