

True Worship -- Part 3

Preparing For Worship

Introduction; A preacher visited a church one time.

- A. He was asked to preach.
 - 1. The first thing he said was, “*I see there is a division in the church here.*”
 - 2. He could tell because half the church was facing one way and the other half was facing in the opposite direction.

- B. Churches have problems over many things.
 - 1. Some divisions are over doctrine. They are over truth and what the word of God says. Truth must be determined by a right understanding of the Bible.
 - 2. We need to stand for truth —Jude 3. We cannot tolerate error. If division comes over truth we must stand for truth —1 Cor 11:18, 19. This is right.
 - 3. However many times division comes, not because of doctrine, but because of personal differences.
 - 4. Brethren have personal problems and cannot get along. Sometimes the other brethren take sides and the church divides. This is wrong.

- C. Many times brethren try to worship God while they harbor ill-will against a brother.
 - 1. In some congregations someone has gotten very upset because someone has sat in their seat.
 - 2. In another place brethren will exit by different doors in order to avoid one another.
 - 3. One couple got mad at the preacher and would not forgive him because he did not come and say hello to them one Sunday morning.
 - 4. Some brethren have been angry with each other so long they have forgotten what started their bitterness.
 - 5. Despite problems like this many times brethren continue to worship together, despite the ill-will and anger. This is not right.

- D. God will not accept our worship if we are not properly prepared to worship.
 - 1. In our series of studies we have seen that there are many kinds of false worship. God rejects these. They do the worshipper no good.
 - 2. We have also seen that true worship must be in ‘*spirit and in truth*’. We must worship properly as God teaches in His word. We must also worship with sincerity and from our hearts.
 - 3. Next week we will consider worship in truth. We will look at how we must worship according to God’s word.
 - 4. This week we want to consider worship in spirit. We want to look at how we prepare ourselves to worship God.
 - 5. God does not accept just any kind of worship men want to give. We cannot just do what please us. He also does not accept any kind of heart we want to have.
 - 6. We must prepare our hearts for worship. We cannot just wait till Sunday morning or Sunday evening or Wednesday night and start thinking about worshipping God.
 - 7. We must be preparing ourselves every day to worship the Lord.

- E. We will talk about preparing ourselves for worship today.

I. Jesus taught that we cannot worship without being prepared.

- A. Jesus taught this in the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ in Matthew 5:21 to 24.
 - 1. This is one of Jesus’ first sermons. He is showing the difference between the way things are and the way they should be.
 - 2. The Jews have been worshipping God since the days of Abraham, over 2000 years. They have had the law of Moses about 1500 years.

3. They should know how to worship. Yet Jesus has many things to say about how their worship and service to the Lord was lacking.
4. **Matthew 5:17-19**; Jesus tells them the law is from God. It cannot be destroyed, only fulfilled. Men cannot disobey even the least commands in the law and be great in the kingdom of God.
5. **Vs 20**; Jesus probably surprises many when He says their righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. Men would say that could not be done. Jesus will show them how it can be done.

B. Jesus then talks to them about their worship.

1. **Matthew 5:21, 22**; First he makes the point that how we treat our brethren and how we feel about him is important. God judges us in these things.
2. They would agree that murder is wrong. However Jesus says that other things are just as important and even more so than not killing someone.
3. Jesus makes anger equal to murder. Both are in danger of the judgment. He then gives two things that are worse. Both are insults to brethren but one seems to be much greater. These put us in danger of the council and the fires of hell.
4. We see how serious our attitude towards our brethren is. We are commanded to love one another and be patient with one another. This type of behavior and attitude is wrong.
5. We may think it is great we do not do violence to someone whom has mistreated us greatly. Jesus expects more than that though.
6. **Vs 23, 24**; Jesus now says, *“Therefore”*. He is making an application to what He just said about our attitude towards our brethren.
7. When we come to worship God and know our brother has something against us we must stop and go make things right with him before we can worship God.
8. There is a proper order before we worship. We must **‘first’** be reconciled to our brother and **‘then’** offer our gifts and worship to God. We must do what we can to make things right with men before we can worship God.
9. *Rom 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

C. Other passages teach this principle too.

1. We are taught we must examine ourselves to make sure we are ‘in the faith’. We must make sure we are faithful stewards of God before we worship Him.
2. *2 Cor 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified.*
3. Christians must examine themselves. This is more than checking to see if we go to church regularly. God expects us to serve Him daily. Are we really putting Him first in our lives.
4. *1 Cor 9:27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*
5. Paul disciplined himself and controlled his own body because he knew a child of God could be lost. How much do we say, “No!”, to the desires of the flesh?
6. *Rom 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*
7. Our bodies are living sacrifices. We must make them a pure sacrifice. We must keep them pure. We do this every day of the week. when we examine ourselves daily and make sure we are following the Lord and not ourselves.
8. *Mark 11:25-26 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."*
9. Notice another example that shows that our behavior affects God accepting our worship and even our prayers. If we are not forgiving to a brother, God will not forgive us.

D. One final N.T. example is the Lord’s Supper.

1. We are commanded to partake of the Lord’s supper as the church on the first day of the week. If we purposely forsake this we are disobedient to our Lord.
2. However some can partake of the communion and still stand condemned before the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

3. Corinth is an example of this in 1 Corinthians 11:17 to 34. We will consider the first half of this next week when we look at worship in truth. The second half of this passage shows the wrong attitude in partaking.
4. *1 Cor 11:26-32 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. 27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*
5. Notice that verse 28 tells us we can partake in an unworthy manner if we do not properly examine ourselves. We can eat and drink damnation to our souls.
6. What does it mean to 'examine ourselves' and to be 'worthy'? There have been many ideas over the years. Some suggest in the context it means only to do it in the proper way. The church should not be divided and it must not be a common meal to satisfy hunger. This is no doubt part of it.
7. Others suggest that 'discerning the Lords' body' means to recognize that the bread is the Lord's body and the cup is his blood that was shed for us. No doubt this is part of it too. However almost everyone knows this intellectually.
8. Still others say it means to think about its meaning and what a blessing we have because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. They say it means to appreciate the Lord's supper. This is certainly true and would eliminate babies and little children from participating.
9. I think all this is true but more is involved. Paul says to, "examine yourselves". We do not want to be condemned with the world —vs 32.
10. I think we need to examine our lives to see if we are striving to follow the Lord every day. Have we prepared ourselves for the Lord's table by how we lived during the week?
11. This does not demand perfection. Rather it demands a dependence on the Lord for our forgiveness.
12. We must examine ourselves to see if we are serious about serving the Lord and fully understand that He does not permit us to live in sin but to live above it.

E. We see then that we must prepare ourselves for worship.

II. This is not new. The O.T. also taught this.

- A. We sometimes think of the O.T. as a physical law and the N.T. as spiritual.
 1. While there is truth in this it is an over simplification. There were many physical aspects of O.T. worship like sacrifices, a temple, incense and so forth.
 2. However God expected heart worship from the followers of Moses. He also expected them to prepare for their worship by the life they lived between sacrifices.
- B. In our first lesson we pointed out that God hates men's worship.
 1. He hates man's worship when it is not true worship. True worship involves several things. It involves truth and doing things God's way. It also involves spirit. This is sincerity and desire and preparing ourselves for worship.
 2. *Psa 51:15-19 O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. 16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart; These, O God, You will not despise. 18 Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, With burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.*
 3. David says the true sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. This is a humble and meek person who has learned to depend on the Lord.
 4. Verse 19 says that then God would be pleased with the sacrifices of his worshippers.
 5. However there are things that must come first. Before the public worship and sacrifices there must be submission to the Lord. We must learn to depend on Him for all we need.
 6. In 1 Samuel 15 king Saul wants Samuel to honor him before the people. He wants him to lead them in sacrifices. Samuel refuses.

7. *1 Sam 15:22-23 Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king."*
8. Samuel makes the point that before Jehovah will accept Saul's worship he must obey Him. Saul has brought back the sheep and oxen and king Agag from the slaughter of the Amalekites.
9. One of his excuses was he was going to worship God with them. They were to be sacrifices. However the Lord was not satisfied with sacrifice and worship unless he was obedient during the week.
10. *Jer 7:9-12 "Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, 10 and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11 Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the LORD. 12 But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel."*
11. Jeremiah teaches the same thing. Their character during the week affected how God would accept their worship. They could not steal, murder, commit adultery, and do the other things and expect God to accept their worship —see also Isa 1:11-15, Mal 1:10-12, etc.
12. We must learn from this as well. God does not accept just any worship. We must prepare ourselves to worship Him by the life we live and the light we shine before others —Matt 5:16.

C. We must be prepared to worship the Lord when we come before Him.

Conclusion: Are we ready to worship Jehovah.

- A. Many things are necessary to offer pleasing worship to God.
 1. We must follow truth and do what He says to do and not follow man's ways and traditions.
 2. We must prepare our hearts by obedience to his word during the week. We must live for Him daily and be the example we should be. We must live righteously every day of the week.
 3. *Matt 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*
- B. The first thing we need to do in order to worship God is to become His child.
 1. We become a child of God through faith, repentance and baptism. We believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God who died for our sins. We repent and turn from those sins.
 2. We are then buried with Him in baptism so our sins can be washed away and we can be adopted into the family of God.
 3. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
 4. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
 5. *Rom 6:3-4 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*
- C. If the church can help anyone in their obedience to the Lord, please let us.