

Worshiping God with My Whole Heart

Last week we studied the wisdom of God and the wisdom He imparts to His children. In this week's text, the Apostle Paul shows us that the first priority for the wise person is the worship of God. This emphasis on worship is consistent with both the Old and the New Testament. John Calvin put it this way, "The first foundation of righteousness is undoubtedly the worship of God."

Ephesians 5:15-21

¹⁵Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

In Paul's instructions regarding the believer's worship, we can observe four very helpful truths:

1. We must worship by the Spirit of God. (v. 18) Just as we can wrongly come under the influence of alcohol and drugs, Paul says we can come "under the influence" of the Spirit, and when we do we will become worshippers. It is the Spirit Who gives us new hearts, illumines our minds to understand the Scriptures, enables us to believe God's promises, and empowers us to worship Him. He Himself, constitutes true worship. His Presence is the sine qua non of true worship.

2. We must worship through our voices. (v.19a) When we come to worship we are not attending a performance; rather, we are the performance. And God is the audience we seek to serve. We, therefore, sing, not because we're good singers, but because He is a gracious God and commands us to sing. (Psalm 100:1) The whole congregation is God's choir, and by the Spirit everyone of us joins in.

3. We must worship to the Lord. (v. 19b) He is actually present when we worship. Everything is either addressed directly to Him or it is done consciously before His face to please Him. This is why our very order of service is in the form of a dialogue: He speaks and we respond. The liturgists are here simply as "prompters" to help us.

4. We must worship with our hearts. (vs. 19c, 20) When we come to worship, we come with many gifts: our time, our voices, our money, our listening ears, our minds—but the most important gift we bring is our hearts. This is what He wants above all else. Isaiah recorded the words of the Lord about Israel: "...this people...honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me..." (Isaiah 19:13)

What does it mean to worship with our hearts? The heart is known as the center of our being, the place where we feel things deeply and hold our firmest convictions. But what is the greatest thing the heart actually does? Above all the heart loves. The heart chooses to bind itself to the object of its affection. This is what the Lord wants: your deepest love. Isaac Watts put it this way:

The Great God values not the service of men, if the heart be not in it; The Lord sees and judges the heart; he has no regard to outward forms of worship, if there be no inward adoration, if no devout affection be employed therein. It is therefore a matter of infinite importance, to have the whole heart engaged steadfastly for God.

But how do I do that? Two pointers that should help:

1. Open your heart to His love. Let Him in. Let Him love you. Think about the Incarnation. He did this for you, to save you from your sins (Matthew 1:121), to be with you forever (Matthew 1:23; 28:20), and by His poverty to make you rich (II Corinthians 8:9). We give thanks "always and for everything," because in every circumstance His blessings abide with us. He really loves us.

2. Get rid of your other lovers. You can't have both Christ and some idol in your life. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters..." The other "lovers" want to pull you away from Him. You must forsake them. Here is how A.W. Tozer once prayed:

Father, I want to know Thee, but my coward heart fears to give up its toys. I cannot part with them without inward bleeding, and I do not try to hide from Thee the terror of the parting. I come trembling, but I do come. Please root from my heart all those things which I have cherished so long and which have become a very part of my living self, so that Thou mayest enter and dwell there without a rival. Then shalt Thou make the place of Thy feet glorious. Then shall my heart have no need of the sun to shine on it, for Thyself will be the light of it, and there shall be no night there. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why must worship be the highest priority for every believer? Why is it often not?
- 2) What does it mean to worship "by the Spirit" (v.18)?
- 3) What sets us free to sing in worship to God?
- 4) What non-essential issues do we need to set aside when we come to worship?

Memory Verses

FOR THIS WEEK

³³Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?

³⁵Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"

³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:33-36

Related Reading

HELPFUL BOOKS

[*Worship Matters*](#)

by Bob Kauflin

[*Worship is a Verb*](#)

by Robert Webber

[*A Royal Waste of Time*](#)

by Dawn Marva

[*Divine Hours*](#)

by Phyllis Tickle

Digging Deeper

Look at your priorities and commitments and schedule. What needs to change for worship to be your first priority?

How can you become a more engaged worshipper?

List at least three action steps.