

Worship 10 - My Responsibility

(Number ten in a series of ten)

Our responsibility, first of all, in worship is to be there. The Hebrew writer states, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:25,26). We have a God given right, privilege, and duty to be present when the saints meet. We have no excuse for staying away. Except for unavoidable hindrances (ie. sickness...), there should be nothing to deter us from our appointed time together. It was a common practice among the early church to meet faithfully on "the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). A failure to do so willfully is a sin, and we have grave warning from God's word on this subject. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." If we truly love God, we will meet together in gladness. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalms 122:1).

A second part of coming together is our responsibility in worship. Worship in the New Testament church was never intended to be done void of responsibility. Each member that makes up the body of the Lord's church has an active part in worship to the "true and living God." It is not right nor is it reasonable to worship God without careful thought or preparation. We are instructed from the "holy writ" to worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). "In spirit" reveals to us that we are to worship from the heart, the inner man. There must be a true desire to please God. Worship must never be mechanical and empty of feeling. Desire is not the only criterion for "true" worship. "In truth" means as opposed to error. All the sincerity in the world will not please God if there is not knowledge of the truth. Jesus said, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). We must know the truth concerning how God is to be worshipped. Jesus said again, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Therefore, to worship "in truth" means in accordance to the truth of God's word. It would be most useless to come together and not worship God. That may sound strange to some that this would even be a topic; but unless we put God in His place of worship, it is vain. While Jesus was being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He declared to the Evil one, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). The Psalmist says, "For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised." "Give unto the Lord the glory due his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts" (Psalms 96:4,8). God and God alone is the one to whom we should worship. He is the only one worthy of our worship. We DO NOT assemble together to worship the preacher or the singing or ourselves (ie. our only reason for showing up is "Entertain Me"). Our object of worship is the Creator. Our responsibility is to seek to worship God because He seeks true worshippers (John 4:23).

Worship demands that we have fellowship. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves TOGETHER" (Hebrews 10:25). "Together" means or carries the idea of fellowship. There are two types of fellowship: "upwardly" and "outwardly." When we speak of upward fellowship, it is that relationship between God and man. The only proper fellowship with God is made possible by His Son. We were once "aliens" and "strangers . . . having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of

Christ" (Ephesians 2:12,13). When we are "in Christ," we are in fellowship with God by the "blood of Christ." This occurs in baptism. "For ye are all children [here is fellowship - pw] of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26,27). Paul in his letter to the Romans asks, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:3; see 4-7). In His death, we come in contact with His blood wherein we are "made nigh" in fellowship with God. Because of our relationship with God, we also have fellowship "outwardly" with the saints. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). What a beautiful picture worship is to be. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22).

Since we have the responsibility to "assemble together" and to "worship in spirit and in truth" and to have the right fellowship, "upwardly and outwardly," it is imperative that we actively participate in our worship. All of us need to be prepared to worship. We cannot stay out all night Saturday and expect to be ready for worship on Sunday. Our mind-set should always be in view of the next time we gather together. How do we "keep ourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21) and not think about God until five minutes before we step inside the church building? How often is it when we know guests are arriving at our house we are unprepared? Of course very seldom, if any. Is being ready to worship less important? Let us beware lest it be said of us, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8). Being prepared for worship means we are "prayed up, studied up, and our lives line up with the word of God."

Besides being prepared to enter into worship, we must also be a part of worship. There are five distinct acts of worship that we must actively join together in-no part of which can we leave out and still be pleasing to God. For instance, one might think he can partake of the Lord's supper only and forget everything else. Some would even partake early before anyone else arrives at the building. Such is certainly not communing with the saints as we are taught to do (Hebrews 10:25).

We are to SING, (Ephesians 5:18,19), GIVE of our means (2 Corinthians 9:6-11), partake of the LORD'S SUPPER (1 Corinthians 11:28-30), and PRAY (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The church that ceases to pray together ceases to stay together.

Finally PREACHING and TEACHING. "It was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:20,21). We are to "teach" and "baptize" then "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I (Jesus) have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20). Paul speaking to Timothy tells us our responsibility here, "Give attendance to reading, to exhortations, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13). One of the greatest examples of a church fulfilling their responsibility in worship to God is found in Acts chapter two.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and

having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41-47).

"Let us draw near." "Let us hold fast." Let us "consider one another." Let us "not forsake the assembling...so much more as you see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:22-25).

WORSHIP

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