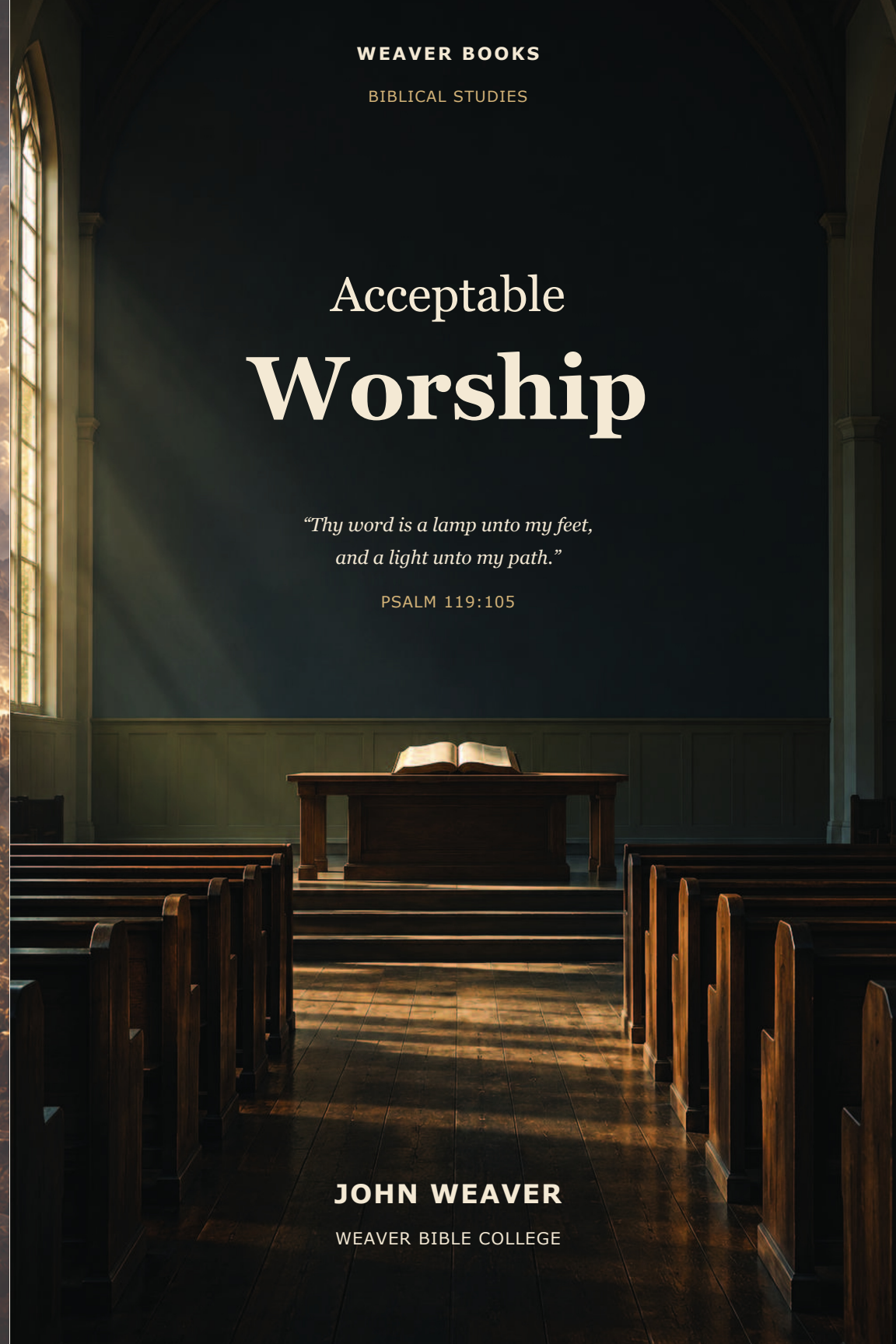
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Acceptable Worship

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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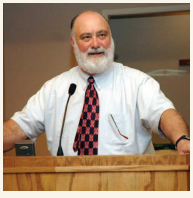
God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

JOHN 4:24

Sincerity alone does not settle the question of acceptable worship. John Weaver examines worship in spirit and truth, the mediation of Christ, and the difference between devotion and idolatry. This connected series asks how God's revelation, rather than human invention, should govern the heart and the public worship of His people.

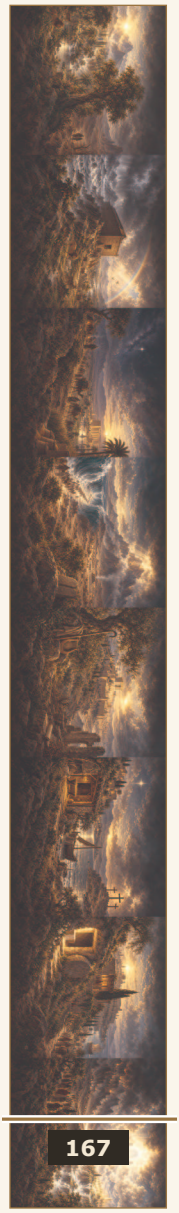
"The only reason anyone can give unto God the Father acceptable worship is because of the person and work of Jesus Christ."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.



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Worshiping the Father in Spirit and in Truth

John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

Acceptable Worship

Part One

Introduction: The Importance of Worship

In John 4, the woman saith unto Jesus, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Jesus saith unto her, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

The woman said unto him, “I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ. When he is come, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said unto her, “I that speak unto thee am he.”

Every Christian should be vitally interested in worship. Worship is that which we render to our great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus

Christ. But not only should Christians be interested in worship; even the unconverted ought to be interested in worship. The first reason is found in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21: “But I say that the things which the Gentiles or the pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. And I would not that you should have fellowship with devils. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. You cannot be partaker of the Lord's table and of the table of devils.”

What is the apostle saying? If you are not worshiping the one true and living God, then the alternative is whatever you are doing is satanic. It is the worship of Satan. So worship is not only a vital interest to the saints; it should also be a vital interest to the sinner. In this context, our Lord is taking the biblical doctrine of worship and using it to evangelize a lost woman in John 4. Worship is indeed a method of evangelization. The Bible is teaching us that there is really no such thing as neutrality in worship.

Definition and Meaning of Worship

We are either worshiping the one true and living God, or we are worshiping the devil. Worship is the reverence, honor, and homage paid to superior beings. You will find this same definition and the same word used in the Bible in reference to God, to men, and even to idols. Worship, then, is the reverence, honor, and homage paid to superior beings. Acceptable worship is honor and reverence paid to the one true and living God.

The word worship literally means proskuneo. Pros is a preposition meaning “to” or “toward,” and it is translated “to fall down before,” or interpreted to mean “to fall down before, to do honor by kissing the hand.” The latter part is from kuon, the Greek word for a dog. How in the world does a dog figure into the definition of worship?

Most of us have dogs, though some do not. When you come up to your dog and hold out your hand, usually what will the dog do? Lick the back of your hand. Sometimes it will simply lie down. If you have a dog like my dog, when Hobie was out helping me yesterday, he knelt down with a handful of boards and could not do anything. My dog took full advantage of the situation and literally washed his face for him. She was a loving, kind dog. But that is exactly what it

means. Worship literally means to bow down before, to submit to, to lick the back of the hand.

The interesting thing is that the word worship, or worshipper, occurs ten times in this short passage in John chapter 4. There is, therefore, a very important aspect when it comes to worship. Certain chapters in the Bible emphasize particular doctrines. If you wanted to study the doctrine of the resurrection, you would go to 1 Corinthians 15, which summarizes the bodily resurrection from the dead. If you wanted to study love, you would go to 1 Corinthians 13. If you wanted to study our Lord's death, you would go to Isaiah 53. Those subjects are taught throughout the entirety of the Bible, but certain chapters concisely state these doctrines. Likewise, John chapter 4 concisely states the doctrine of worship.

Now the Bible says in Psalm 89 verse 7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be held in reverence of all them that are about Him." God is greatly to be feared where? In the assembly of the saints. And He is to be held in reverence of all them that are about Him.

In Psalm 95, beginning with verse 6, the Bible says, "O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Now watch: "O come let us worship and bow down." You remember the definition of "to bow down," like a dog? "Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." There is submission. Why? "For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand."

We are the creature, and He is the Creator. We are the subjects, and He is the King. We are the servants, and He is the Lord. And so we are to bow down before Him, acknowledging His greatness.

Let me tell you very quickly how important this subject is. There are people all across the land today who are going to what they call worship services. Do you realize that the average professing Christian actually believes that as long as he goes into a church building, sings a few hymns, throws a quarter or two in the offering plate, listens to a sermon, and then leaves, somehow, some way, he has really worshipped God?

That is absolutely the furthest from the truth. Our Lord said in John 4, "God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him

in spirit and in truth." Do you remember Mark chapter 7? You will also find it in Matthew 15. The Pharisees came to our Lord and were complaining.

Our Duty to Worship God

They asked, "Why is it your disciples wash not their hands as the tradition of the elders teaches us before they eat?" It was not a matter of cleanliness, health, or sanitation, but a tradition of the elders. Our Lord said to them, "Why is it with your tradition you transgress the Word of God?" The Pharisees were so concerned about their tradition, ceremonies, and rituals that they griped and complained about our Lord's disciples, while their hearts were filthy before God and they were not worshipping the one true and living God.

Do you realize that one of the greatest hindrances to real worship is religion? Religion always has its own traditions, rituals, and ceremonies, and people think that as long as they fulfill those ceremonies, they worship God. Religion teaches that fallen men can do things acceptable unto God, which is absolutely contrary to Scripture. Romans 8 teaches us, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Fallen men cannot please God or serve God.

Unsaved men may be generous philanthropists, sincere religionists, zealous denominationalists, or regular communicants. But Scripture teaches that unsaved men cannot worship God properly, because there is nothing in them that would enable them to give God the honor and worship that He is due. God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The Duty to Worship God

Our first point is this: It is our duty to worship God. In Exodus chapter 20, beginning with verse 1, the Bible says, "And the Lord God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Verse 3 says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In Matthew chapter 4 and verse 10, our Lord said to Satan, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God only, and him alone shalt thou

serve." Let me tell you, in a very general sense of the word, what your God is.

Your God, in essence, is whatever you set your heart upon, whatever you give adoration and honor and devotion unto. There is an interesting verse in 1 John 5 and verse 21, the last verse in the book of 1 John: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” A number of scholars believe that 1 John was the last book written, chronologically speaking, in our Bibles. If that is so, instead of Revelation being the last book, 1 John would be the last book.

It would be interesting that Genesis 1:1 opens, “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth,” and the last verse would be, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

There is in this day and time the god of money. Someone has suggested that the motto of the United States should not be, “In God we trust,” but “In this god we trust,” because that is what most people literally trust in: their money. Our Lord said, “You cannot serve God and mammon.” The Bible talks in Ephesians 5 and verse 5 about covetous men who are idolaters.

Then there is the god of pleasure. The Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 4, that men should be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Then there is the god of the belly. Philippians chapter 3 and verse 19 speaks about the ungodly: “Whose god is their belly.”

So you have the god of money, the god of pleasure, and the god of the belly. You have the god of fashion. The Bible tells us in 1 Timothy chapter 2 that women should dress in modest apparel, not modern. There is nothing wrong with modern as long as it is modest. The attire for Christians is not to be dictated by Hollywood, Paris, France, or even New York City. It is to be dictated by the Word of God.

The Bible tells us, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” If the one true and living God, as He has revealed Himself in the Bible, is indeed the one true and living God, then He must be worshipped. It is our duty to worship Him because He is God. Let me give you several rights that He has to be worshipped. First of all, He should be worshipped by virtue of creation right.

Psalm 100 says, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord, he is God. It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. Be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations.”

Why should we worship Him? Because we are His people, and we are the sheep of His pasture. He has made us, and not we ourselves. So God deserves to be worshipped simply by virtue of creation, right? He is the Creator, and the creature owes his very existence to the Creator. Secondly, there is what you and I would call the providential right. Look in the book of Acts, chapter 14.

You'll also find this same truth in Psalm 29. But look in Acts 14:17. Here is the providential right. The Bible says in reference to God, “Nevertheless, he,” that is, God, “left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” Note that verse: God did not leave himself without witness.

Most people never stop to think that it is only by God's providence that we have food, rain, sunshine, and health. What has God done? God has not left Himself without witness. God has done good in that He provides for everyone, even those that hate Him.

So He deserves to be worshipped, not simply by reason of creation right—the Creator—but also by providence right. It is His providence that brings to pass in our lives those good things that you and I take for granted daily.

But then, thirdly, He should be worshipped because of a redemptive right. The Bible says in Psalm 107:2, and then all through Psalm 107, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the enemy.” I remember one church Alice and I used to attend when we were young. They used to have say-so meetings, a short period for testimony when you could stand and say what the Lord had done for you. They would take this

text: “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the enemy.”

If God has redeemed us, saved us, and delivered us from our sins, then we have a duty and an obligation to worship Him—not simply because we are creatures, not simply because of His providence, but because He has redeemed us. He has bought us. We're His. We belong to Him.

And then, fourthly, there is another reason: a kingship right. The Bible tells us in 1 Timothy 6:15-16. I can quote this passage, but I want you to see it. This is one of my favorite passages. Turn there and notice verses 15 and 16.

The Bible says concerning Christ, "Who in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see, to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen." He is "the blessed and only potentate," the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The word potentate literally means the all-powerful one. I had a pastor friend with me one day, and we were going to a gun show in the Shrine temple. As we walked up, I saw a parking spot with a sign that said, "Reserved for the Potentate." I looked at my pastor friend and said, "Isn't that wonderful? Christ may be at this gun show because here's a parking place reserved just for him. He's the only potentate that I know."

He is King of kings and Lord of lords. There is a kingship here. Why should we worship Him? Not simply by virtue of creation, not simply by virtue of providence, not even simply by virtue of redemption, but also because He is King.

Worship as a Means of Evangelism

Failure to worship the one true and living God is a sin. In fact, it is one of the greatest sins.

Let us consider the context of John chapter 4. We read only verses 19 through 26, but beginning in verse 4, our Lord must needs go through Samaria. He was seated at the well when a woman of Samaria came to draw water, and He said, "Give me water to drink."

She said, "Why is it you're speaking to me? Because I'm a Samaritan and you folks don't talk to us Samaritans." Our Lord said, "Look, if you knew who it was that spoke to you, you would ask of Him living water and He would give you living water that you would never have to thirst again." She said, "Evermore, give me this water." Our Lord said, "Well, I'll tell you what, before I give you the water, you go and call your husband." She said, "I have no husband." He said, "Oh, you said a mouthful, honey, because you've had five and the one you're living with now is not even your husband."

She went away to the city and said, “Come see a man that told me all things ever I did. Is not this the Christ?” The men then came out and told the woman, “Now we believe Him, not because of what you said, but because of what He said.” So it is in this context of John chapter 4, where our Lord is witnessing to this fallen woman.

He is telling her about salvation, but He is doing so with the biblical doctrine of worship. Part of evangelism is laying upon the conscience our duty before God. When you lay upon a sinner’s conscience his duty, and he understands that he cannot perform that duty, there is a conviction that settles in. That is exactly what our Lord was doing. He was saying, “Look, woman, you have a duty to worship God. But you’re unfit to worship God. You’re unable to worship God. You cannot worship God in your condition.”

In essence, you must be regenerated. You must be converted. The biblical doctrine of worship is also a means of evangelism. It is not simply reminding the saints of their duty; it is also reminding sinners of their duty. They must worship. We are obligated to worship God. God demands that we worship Him based upon creation, based upon providence, based upon redemption, and based upon the kingship of Christ.

God Is Not Indifferent to How We Worship

God is not indifferent as to how we worship Him. We have so degenerated in our day and time that we take the idea, “I’ll just worship God any old way I please.” But the same Bible that teaches us that we must worship God also teaches us how we are to worship God. Do you realize the first overt, that is, the first open sin in the Bible, was over worship?

Genesis chapter 4: Cain and Abel. Abel brought the sacrifice that God required, but Cain did not. Cain's sacrifice was condemned and rejected, whereas Abel's was accepted and pleasing unto God. In that passage we find that God smiles upon the acceptable worshipper, but God frowns upon the unacceptable worshipper. God is not indifferent as to how we worship Him. Have you ever thought and asked yourself, "I wonder what God's attitude is toward unacceptable worship?" Let's broaden it: "I wonder what God thinks about all the religious services that are going on in this city and every other city in this country?"

God's Judgment on Unacceptable Worship

It may shock you what I am about to show you from the Bible, but I am going to show you exactly what God thinks about unacceptable worship. Look at Isaiah chapter 1, beginning with verse 11. Notice the question God asks:

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" saith the Lord. "I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats."

"When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me. The new moons and the Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with it. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth. They are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood."

Now let me ask you a question. Did not God appoint the solemn meetings? Did not God appoint the new moons and the feast days? Yes. Did not God appoint the Sabbaths? Yes. Did not God appoint the sacrifices? Yes. But look what He says: "I hate it. I won't have it. I can't stand it."

It gets even stronger. In Amos chapter 5, beginning with verse 21, God says: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in

your solemn assemblies. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them. Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Listen to what He said: "I hate, I despise your feast days. I will not smell in your solemn assemblies." I do not care how much incense you offer or how many sacrifices you give. I will not smell it.

God said, "Take away from me the noise of thy songs." All their beautiful singing and instruments were nothing but noise to God. He said, "I won't have it." And He tells you why: "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Do you remember why God refused their sacrifices and offerings? He said, "When you stretch forth your hands to me, I will hide my eyes. Why? Your hands are full of blood." He said, "You're wicked, you're disobedient, you're ungodly, and you think that coming to Me with a little ritual, a little ceremony, a little tradition is going to make you acceptable in My sight and make your worship acceptable. You're wrong. I hate it."

And in Amos chapter 5, once again, He says, "I hate, I despise your feast days." God ordained those feast days, solemn assemblies, songs, and music. But God says, "What you're doing is unacceptable," because there is no judgment, no justice, and no righteousness in your lives.

Let me ask you a question. This is a mind-boggling question: Does it bother you that God may be hating what you're doing this very moment? Does it bother you that what the average church gives to God is detested and despised by God?

Look in your Bibles to Malachi chapter 1. Listen to these questions. God says, "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master. If then I be a father, where is mine honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?"

“Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar. And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor. Will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.”

"And now I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us. This hath been by your means. Will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of hosts. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for naught. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering. For my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."

If I am a father, where is my honor? If I am a master, where is my fear? Then He says, "O ye priests that despise my name." They ask, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" He answers, "In that you have offered polluted bread upon mine altar." In other words, they treated every sacrifice as acceptable: "A sacrifice is a sacrifice is a sacrifice."

He said, “And in that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.” Whenever we think the worship of God or the preaching of the Word is second-rate or second place, we despise God’s worship and God’s person.

Look at verse 8: “And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?” Each sacrificial lamb and ram had to be perfect because they represented and pictured Jesus Christ. Yet these people offered lambs and rams that were blind, maimed, and sick. Their attitude was, “Well, that’s called dying. I might as well give it to God.” But God said, “If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?”

Then he said, “Offer it now unto thy governor. Will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.” In effect, God said, “Get the high civil authority in the land to your house, and

give him for supper what you give me. Get that old blind lamb that is sick and sore, with God blisters and sores all over him. Cook that up for your governor and see if your governor will accept it." None of us would do that to a friend, or even to an enemy. But God said, "That's exactly what you're giving me." He said, "I hate it. I won't have it. I won't stand for it."

In verse 10 he said, "Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for naught. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand." The average church must pay a musician, a janitor, and people to do things around it. Who is willing to do these things out of honor, adoration, and worship to God? Instead, people want to be paid. God said, "I have no pleasure in you. You're a money-oriented, money-grubbing people who are not willing to sacrifice for me."

Jeremiah 7 condemns modern-day religiosity and shows why the average church cannot prosper spiritually:

"Do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord. Do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beasts, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground, and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people, and walk ye in all the way that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.

"But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels of the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck, they did worse than their fathers. Therefore thou shalt

speak all these words unto them, but they will not hearken unto thee. Thou shalt also call unto them, but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction. Truth is perished and is cut off from their mouth."

What was the point of all the sacrifices if you are going to disobey God? You think that you can settle down into some little ceremony and ritual, live your life in disobedience to God and His Word, and somehow your offerings and sacrifice will be acceptable. God says, "Oh no." His wrath is burning against you. It is true that we must worship God, but we also must worship God acceptably. There is a worship that is unacceptable to God.

Acceptable Worship Is a Matter of Divine Revelation

Now let me ask a hard question. I am going to try to answer this for you over the next several weeks. How do you know whether or not your worship is acceptable before God? What is acceptable worship? If your worship is not acceptable, the truth of Scripture is that God's anger and God's wrath are burning against you. The Bible tells us, and I will cover this later, that God is to be the exclusive object of worship. He said, "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt."

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Then the very next thing He said was this: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images." What is He saying? He is saying that the one true living God cannot be materialized. I will explain that a little bit later. You cannot have a material God the way the heathen, the way the pagans did in the Old Testament. God is the exclusive object of worship, but in worshiping Him, we must worship Him the way that He demands.

Now look in John chapter 4 at what He told the Samaritan woman. In verse 22, He told the Samaritan woman, "Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship." Why in the world did He tell that woman, "Ye worship ye know not what"? Do you remember how the Samaritans came into existence? Do you remember in 2 Kings 17, when Israel had been conquered? The king of Assyria moved a lot of the Israelites, those who were not killed, out of the land into captivity in Assyria. Then he sent a lot of the

heathen into the northern kingdom around Samaria. There was an amalgamation of the pagans and some of those people who were left in the land, and they intermarried. That is where the Samaritans came from. They were half-breeds.

The Judahites in the southern tribe despised them. In fact, they would do everything they could; usually they would walk around Samaria. They would not even go through Samaria. They so despised the Samaritans. Now, the Samaritans had a little bit of truth, but not the whole truth. The Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim, but they only accepted the Pentateuch as the Word of God—that is, the first five books in the Bible, the books of Moses. So our Lord said, "You don't even know what you're worshiping. You don't even have a complete Bible." And they did not. He said, "We know what we're worshiping because unto Israel was committed the oracles of God."

When people say, "I'm going to worship according to what I think best," that's rationalism. You are worshipping your own mind, taking it and putting it in competition with the divine revelation of God. Some people say, "I think I'm going to worship this way." That's pure rationalism.

Others say, "I know what makes me feel good, and I'm going to worship according to my feelings." That's subjectivism. That's not revelation. Someone says, "I'm going to worship according to experience because I know how it's been done for years." That's traditionalism. That's not divine revelation. Someone says, "I want to worship based upon what works." That's pragmatism. That's not divine revelation. You say, "I know what makes me feel good. I know what makes me feel fulfilled and satisfied." That's sentimentalism. That's not divine revelation.

I've heard people tell me many times, "Well, Brother Weaver, the reason I go to that church is it just makes me feel so good." What? The reason I go to that church is that it makes me feel so good. Has it ever dawned upon you that worship is not designed for you? It's designed for God. The question is not whether it makes you feel good, but is it acceptable unto God? That's the question. You cannot live by feelings. You must live by the Word of God.

Let me give you an illustration. I've taught school from the fourth grade all the way through college. Numerous times I've asked for papers to be written. Whenever I asked for a paper, I would say, "I want five pages. I want it typewritten. I want it double spaced. I want the title to be at the top. I want your name to be at the right. I want the date to be there. When you get through, I want a bibliography," and I would tell them how I wanted it done.

After I gave them that information, some kid would come up with a couple of pages scribbled by hand, no title, no bibliography, his name on the left-hand side, and the paper barely legible. He hands that to me. Do you think that, as a teacher, I would accept that paper? I'd say, "Son, unless you want a zero, you're going to do this work exactly the way I tell you to do it."

Acceptable Worship Is a Matter of Divine Revelation

If I would be that fastidious as a teacher, do you think that God is less fastidious concerning his worship? Do you think that people could just give to God any old thing they please and God would just smile and say, "Well, I understand. I'll take it"? Now stop and think about that. No. The same Bible that tells us that God must be worshipped also tells us how God is to be worshipped. And God will not accept or receive unacceptable worship.

You remember I quoted this verse in here innumerable times. Galatians 6 and verse 16. God said, "As many as walk according to this rule," that is this standard, this Bible, "peace be upon them and mercy upon the Israel of God." Acceptable worship is a matter of divine revelation. I've already hinted at it, but acceptable worship is a matter of divine revelation.

I don't have to develop this point too much, I think that you will automatically understand it. Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and the children of Israel may have been a little discontented. Moses could have said, "I know what I'll do. I'll just build a tabernacle. I'll design it like this and I'll design it like that, and I'll call all the people in here and we'll worship God and it'll all work out. They'll be happy and satisfied, and they'll cause me less heartache and less problem." Is that how the tabernacle came about? Oh, no. The tabernacle did not originate with Moses. The tabernacle

came from God. God gave Moses the directions for everything in the tabernacle and the tabernacle itself. And then God said this to Moses, "See that thou make it according to the pattern given thee in the mount."

Moses couldn't make that altar any dimension he wanted to make it. Moses couldn't say, "Well, you know, we've got this old ugly tabernacle right here. I think if I put a little bay window right here on this side, that'd make it more beautiful and more appealing." No, no, no! He did not have that option! He had to make it exactly the way God ordained it. When the temple was built, did Solomon just simply build it according to his own design? No, no, no! He built it according as it was revealed.

When you understand that worship must be acceptable, you must also comprehend the fact that for worship to be acceptable, it must be according to divine revelation. God has said, "This is what pleases me. This is what I want." And God's not going to receive anything else. God has revealed in His Word what is acceptable, what is unacceptable.

Acceptable Worship Is a Fruit of Christ's Work

Now one last thought today, and I want you to turn in your Bibles to several passages. I want you to see that acceptable worship is a direct fruit of the work of Jesus Christ. Let's turn in our Bibles first of all to Matthew 1. Matthew 1. And look, if you would, please, at verse 21. Matthew 1 verse 21. Our Lord is to be born. And the angel tells Mary and Joseph. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. Why?"

"For he shall save his people from their sins." Now listen carefully. The only reason anyone can give unto God the Father acceptable worship is because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ did not save us, we could not give to God that which he demands. Romans 8 once again says, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." So whatever is acceptable to God must be through the person of Jesus Christ.

Paul writes, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is

safe. Beware of dogs." He is not talking about the four-legged kind. "Beware of dogs. Beware of evil workers. Beware of the concision." He is talking about the Jews, the Pharisees. Then he says, "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit. How can we worship Him in spirit? Because we rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. In other words, the true worship of God is a direct fruit of the work of Jesus Christ. You cannot worship Jesus Christ.

You cannot worship God the Father except through Jesus Christ. Notice 1 Peter 3:18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. Why did He suffer for our sins? Why did the just One suffer for we, the unjust ones? Here is the answer: "That he might bring us to God." It would be impossible to be brought to God in any other way except through Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me." The only way that we can worship God acceptably is because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Think about worship this week. It is going to take me four or five weeks to finish this, but I am going to show you from the Bible, Lord willing, what worshipping God in spirit, what worshipping God in truth really are, and how we can give that acceptable worship to God. There is more to worship than plopping down in a pew, flipping a quarter in the plate, singing a song, hearing a sermon, and going home. The one thought I want to leave you with today is this: We must worship God, and we must worship Him acceptably.

Conclusion: Call to Acceptable Worship

And the only way we can do that is by worshiping Him according to divine revelation through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Father, help us. Speak to our hearts. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Teach us what it is to worship Thee, and enable us to give Thee the worship that is due

unto Thy great, glorious, and majestic name. For Thou only art worthy. We bow to Thee, O Lord; we kneel to Thee. Thou art our Creator, we the creature; Thou art our King, we the subjects; Thou art our Master, we the slaves. In Thy divine providence Thou hast given us all good things, and we acknowledge it and worship Thee. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Acceptable Worship

Part Two

Review of Previous Message

In John chapter four, the woman said unto Jesus, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Jesus answered, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when you shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. You worship you know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming, who is called Christ. When he has come, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said unto her, “I that speak unto thee am he.”

Let me briefly remind you of the message from last week. First, I demonstrated from Scripture that it is our duty and obligation to worship God: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him alone shalt thou serve.” We have this duty by virtue of our creation. We are His creatures, so God has a creation right to be worshiped. He has a providential right because He has done good and supplied our needs. He has a redemptive right, especially in and of His people. He also has a kingship right, because He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Therefore, we are obligated and duty bound to worship Him.

Secondly, God is not indifferent as to how we worship Him. I took you to Amos chapter 5, Isaiah chapter 1, Malachi chapter 1, and Jeremiah chapter 7, where God told His people of old, “I hate, I despise your worship. I will not have it.” God Himself ordained the sacrifices and solemn assemblies, yet He said He would not have them. Each time, He explained that their hands were full of blood and their lives were unholy and ungodly. If we think God is satisfied with rituals and ceremonies, we are mistaken. God said, “I will not have it.” God is not indifferent as to how we worship Him.

Could it be that what we are rendering unto God, God hates rather than receives? We need to make sure that our worship is rendered acceptably unto Him.

Acceptable worship is a matter of divine revelation. We do not worship according to what we think, what we feel, what works, or what feels good. We worship according to the Word of God. Rationalism, subjectivism, pragmatism, and sentimentalism are rejected. Our worship must be given based upon the Word of God.

Acceptable worship is also a direct fruit of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that we are the true worshipers who worship God in spirit and in truth, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Anyone who has ever rendered acceptable worship has done so only by the direct fruit of Jesus Christ.

Do you know that your worship is acceptable unto God? Certain chapters emphasize particular themes: 1 Corinthians 15 deals with the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 13 with love, and Isaiah 53 with the suffering of the Messiah. When you think about worship, you think

about John chapter 4, for in this brief passage the word worship or worshiper occurs ten times.

Our Lord says, “Ye know not what ye worship: ye worship ye know not what.” But He says, “We know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.” In other words, it was the southern tribe where the temple and tabernacle were, where the law was, and where the true preaching and teaching of the Levites were. The Samaritans were half-breeds because, when the king of Assyria came in, killed many Israelites, and took many captive, he brought other heathen in, and they intermarried. The southern kingdom hated and despised the Samaritans so greatly that they would not even walk through there; they would walk around it. That is why the Samaritan woman asked our Lord, “Why is it that you, being a Jew, would even speak to me, which I am a woman of Samaria?”

The Proper Object of Acceptable Worship

Then she said, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and I will deal with that later, but you say that in Jerusalem is a place where men ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, that is Gerizim, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father.” Then he says, “Ye worship ye know not what.” If he was a prophet, as she acknowledged, he could settle the issue: Where is the correct place to worship?

Our Lord said, in effect, “You have it all wrong. It is not going to be at Jerusalem, and it is not going to be at Gerizim.” There is an acceptable worship, but it is not in those materialistic places.

The point to emphasize is this: When an individual is truly regenerated and converted, the very first thing he does is begin to worship. In 1 Corinthians 14:24–25, the Bible says, “But if all prophesy, that is, if all preach, and there come in one that believeth not, that is, he is unconverted, or one that is unlearned, he is convinced or convicted of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.” Thus, the very first thing a converted sinner does is really begin to worship the one true and living God.

The Proper Object of Acceptable Worship

The proper object of acceptable worship is the one true and living God, who is indeed the exclusive object of worship. Our Lord says in verse 24, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Here, then, is a reference to God.

Now, if you look in verse 21, Jesus said unto her, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” Then, in verse 23: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

The Bible teaches us that we must worship the one true and living God. However, it goes further: we must worship the one true and living God who is revealed as Father. Worship is not simply worshiping God in a general theistic sense, saying, “I believe there is a God somewhere.” We must worship the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in Scripture, who has revealed Himself as Father, and who is in and of Himself Spirit. His essence is Spirit.

Worship Must Be Based on Knowledge of God

Worship involves not only the affections, but the mind actively engaged in giving honor, reverence, and homage to the one true and living God. It is true—and I am going to point it out later in the study—that you cannot worship arightly unless your affections are right. That is why, in Colossians 3, he said, “Set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” But it is also true that you cannot worship aright unless your thoughts are biblical and scriptural.

Please listen to this: idolatry does not begin in the workshop; it begins in the mind. Romans 1:20 says, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” We are talking about the creation knowledge of God. But verse 21 says that when they knew God, “they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was

darkened." Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

Note this: idolatry began in the mind and then went to the workshop. It is never the opposite. It does not begin in the workshop; it always begins in the mind.

Now listen, since that is true, it is possible to be in a Christian assembly and be guilty of idolatry. Because if you have wrong thoughts about God, then to that point, you are guilty of some form of idolatry.

Now, look in your Bibles. Let me just lay the introduction. Look in your Bibles to 2 Peter 1, verse 2. And then we're going to chapter 3 and verse 18. Look at 2 Peter 1, verse 2. The Bible says, Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.

How? Through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. How are grace and peace to be multiplied unto us? Through what? Through knowledge.

Now that's not just knowledge in a general sense. That's not just knowledge of history, or knowledge of science, or knowledge of mathematics. Certainly we could say of history and science and mathematics as they relate to God and as they are taught and clearly revealed in the Scripture. But when he says grace and peace be multiplied in you, it's specifically through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Then if you look at 2 Peter 3 and verse 18, 2 Peter 3 and verse 18, notice he says this, But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To him be glory, both now and forever. Amen.

Now, let me just point out one little word in verse 18. It's the word and, A-N-D. When he says, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The little Greek word for and is the word kai, K-A-I. And kai is translated and many times in our Bibles. But it is also translated another way many times in our Bibles. The one little word, kai, can also be translated not just and, but even. So the word kai is translated and or even. So you could read verse 18, but grow in grace even in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In other words, you're not growing in grace

unless you're growing in knowledge. Now, the point I'm trying to make is this.

We cannot worship God acceptably if we are ignorant. If we are going to bring God acceptable worship, we must bring Him an ever-increasing knowledge of Himself as He is revealed in Scripture. We worship God as the one true and living God, as He is revealed as Father, and as the one who is in and of Himself Spirit.

The reason our Lord looked at the Samaritan woman and said, "Ye know not what ye worship," was that the Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Bible—as the authoritatively inspired Word of God. They rejected the Psalms, the historical books, and the minor and major prophets. How could they then bring God acceptable worship? What they had was basically ignorance. Our Lord says that we cannot bring God acceptable worship if we are worshiping ignorantly. Unless we understand that we are to bring God His worship, and that His worship is based upon the truth of Scripture, our worship is certainly going to be unacceptable to some degree.

Consider an illustration from Acts 17. Paul was preaching on Mars Hill, where the Greeks had all their gods, including an altar to the unknown God, just in case they had missed one. Paul began preaching: "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God, whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." There was a reason why Paul said that.

Worship the God Revealed in the Totality of Scripture

Paul said to the Athenians, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." They had an altar to the unknown God, but they did not know who He was. Paul declared that God made the world and all things therein. He is the Lord of heaven and earth, the only Potentate, and does not dwell in temples made with hands. He is a spiritual being, neither worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things. He has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all

the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation.

Paul wanted to declare the one true and living God: the unity of His being, the sovereignty of His reign, and the glory of His essence and person. He is the Creator, Director, Sustainer, and Preserver of the universe. In other words, they had an altar to the unknown God and did not know one thing about Him. How can you worship Him or give Him anything when you are absolutely, totally ignorant of Him?

If you read Psalm 78, especially verses 42–72, you will notice the repeated reference to God as "He." He chose Israel. He delivered Israel. He sent the rain and the lightnings. Everything revealed about God in Psalm 78 shows us an aspect of His character.

There was a man named Bishop Oxnam, famous for saying, "The God of the Old Testament is a dirty bully." This professed preacher was saying that there is a God in the Old Testament and a God in the New Testament, and that they are totally different. But everything in the Old Testament Scriptures teaches us who the one true and living God really is, and everything in the New Testament Scriptures teaches us the same.

In Revelation 4:11, He alone is worthy to receive all honor, glory, praise, and homage. The same is true in Revelation 7:11–12.

Who is the proper object of worship? The answer is the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in the totality of His revelation. Where there is ignorance of this glorious Person, there cannot be acceptable worship. The starting place for worship is to convey the knowledge of God. That is why, on Mars Hill in Acts 17, Paul began evangelizing those people by telling them who God really is.

Where there is rejection of any aspect of God's revealed character, worship is defective in proportion to that rejection. Let me say that again, because it is very important: where there is rejection of any aspect of His revealed character, worship is defective in proportion to that rejection. Now, I admit, I confess, I acknowledge that God's character baffles us. God is unique; there is no one like Him. His

being mystifies us, and certainly we cannot comprehend or understand God totally, fully, and completely.

But there is a vast difference between not being able to understand and comprehend God and rejecting or refusing some revealed truth in the Word of God. When we refuse or reject that revealed truth, to that extent our worship is defective.

For instance, many of you could point to preachers today who emphasize all the time, “God is love. God is love.” Is God love? Yes, that is what the Bible says. God is love. But you never, ever hear them say anything else about God. Is God just? Yes. Is God righteous? Yes. Is God pure and holy? Yes. Here you have, on the one hand, people who emphasize the love of God, and, on the other hand, reject or refuse the absolute justice of God. Here are people who deny and hate God’s sovereignty. They say, “God is not like that.” Or they deny God’s holiness.

I told you in times past this illustration, and it comes to my mind. I was in a pastor’s office, and he and I were sitting there rejoicing over some truths of the Scripture. One of the subjects we were discussing was the biblical doctrine of election. His secretary was in the next room. She was not even privy to our conversation, but the door was open, and she could hear us. We were talking about the doctrine of election.

We had been doing so for fifteen or twenty minutes when, all of a sudden, she jumped up, ran into the room, and blurted out, “I don't care what the Bible says. I know God is not like that.” You understand what I am saying? You may not understand a certain aspect of God's character, and you may not be able to comprehend it. But if it is revealed in Scripture, it is truth. To the degree that you refuse or reject that truth concerning God, to that degree your worship is defective and unacceptable.

The one true and living God must be worshipped in the totality of His revelation. What does that mean? If we genuinely worship God, we must constantly and continually bring to God an increasing knowledge of His person and character. We ought to know more about God today than we knew last week, and more this year than we knew last year. We must come with an accurate knowledge.

One reason I enjoy and prefer to sing the Psalms is, first of all, because they are scriptural; they are right out of the Bible. Secondly, consider the difference between music today and music from one hundred, four hundred, or five hundred years ago. Think of Martin Luther's hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, A Bulwark Never Failing.” Remember the old hymn, “And can it be that I should gain an entrance in my Savior's love? Died He for me?” and right on down the line. Look at all the old hymns: how they exalt God, how they exalt the truth of God, or some aspect of His character. “Holy, holy, holy”—the holiness of God. Then compare that with modern-day music.

Everything today is about man; it is not about God. Most of our modern-day music is meant to stir us, move our feet, and not our hearts or minds. It teaches us absolutely nothing about God. If a hymn is not going to teach me something, I do not want to sing it. If it is going to teach me something wrong, I certainly do not want to sing it. You can remember music when you will forget a sermon.

Worship the One True God as Father

Alice and I could not help laughing at some of these things. We saw a little child, three or four years old, going around singing, “When you’re out of bud, you’re out of beer.” Where did he hear that? On television. It was simply a catchy tune. At Mule Days, we saw a woman pushing a child in a carriage while he sang, “Outback Steakhouse, Outback Steakhouse.” It was catchy. The problem with music is that if you listen to and learn wrong theology through it, you will bring defective worship to God. It will be crippled.

We must worship the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in the totality of Scripture. Secondly, we must worship the one true and living God who has revealed Himself as Father. In John 4:21, Jesus said, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” Verse 23 says, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

Worship the God Who Is Father of the Lord Jesus Christ

We must worship not only the one true and living God as He is revealed in the totality of Scripture, but also the one true and living God who has revealed Himself as Father. How is God Father? In two ways. First, God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Godhead. Secondly, He is the Father of believers in reference to His grace and mercy.

The first of these especially needs explanation: He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Godhead. There are many times in Scripture when Jesus Christ referred to God as Father. Yet there is a vast difference between Christ's referring to God as Father and the disciples' referring to Him as Father.

I can look at my dad and call him Father, and you understand that because he is older than I am and responsible for my being. Although I came from him, we are two different people; we are not one. But every time our Lord used the term Father, He was identifying Himself as God. Look in your Bibles. We are in John; let us begin with John chapter 5.

Notice verse 16: "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath days. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Now Christ referred to God as His Father. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him. Why? Because He had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father. They understood the issue: making Himself equal with God. By using the term Father, He was claiming equality of being. He was saying, "We are one."

If you look in John 17, our Lord's high priestly prayer, beginning with verse 1, the Bible says, "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come." He called God His Father. Then, in verse 5, He said, "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Christ was saying that He was one with God before the world was. He was claiming glory that He had with the Father before creation.

If that is not clear, go back to John chapter 10. Our Lord speaks very plainly, beginning with verse 27: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.”

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus said, “Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?” They answered, “For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” Their answer makes plain what they understood Him to be claiming. Whenever our Lord said “Father,” He was claiming oneness or equality with the one true and living God.

In Matthew 11:26–27, our Lord again refers to God as His Father: “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in my sight.” He continues, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” Then He says, “And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”

Only God can know God. No one knows the Father but the Son, and no one knows the Son but the Father. The only way anyone can understand who Christ is, is for the Father to reveal Him. Likewise, the only way anyone can understand the Father is for Christ to reveal Him.

Thus, when Jesus Christ calls God His Father, He is saying that He is one with God. There can be no worship where there is ignorance of, or rejection of, Him who is the eternal Son of God.

Jesus Christ has eternally been the Son of the Father. Therefore, to worship Him, we must worship the one true and living God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, believers worshipped God as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Romans 15:5–6, the Apostle Paul writes, “Now the God of patience and consolation grants you to be like-minded one toward another according to Jesus Christ, that you

may with one mind and one mouth glorify God," which God? The One who is even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second Corinthians 1:3 says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." How is He worshipped? Not merely as the Creator God, nor merely as the one true and living God. He is that, but He is more: He is the God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who have blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." So they blessed the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. How were they praising God? They were worshiping Him not merely as the one true and living God, but as the one true and living God who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 17 says, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of Him." Who is the God of glory? Who is the Father of glory? He is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

First Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again into a lively or living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Again, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God has revealed Himself not merely as the Creator God, nor merely as the one true and living God, but as the God who is the Father of Jesus Christ.

In 2 John, verse 3, the Bible says, "Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and in love." So God has revealed Himself not just as the one true and living God, but as the one who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may say, "I don't understand that." I'm going to try to explain a little bit of it to you in just a moment. But please understand that God, the one true and living God, cannot be reduced to a mathematical formula. There is no one who can explain God. God is unique. In fact, I'll show you verses later on in this study. There is

nothing with whom and to whom you can compare God, because there is no other individual, no other person like Him. He is unique.

Where worship is not rendered to Him as the one true and living God—the one true and living God who has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ—then that worship is defective. There are people today who call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses, and they deny the deity of Christ. They say that Jesus Christ is not God, and that God is not the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me show you something in John chapter 5. I have had my share of conversations with those individuals, but let me show you a passage of Scripture that is so clear, it is unmistakable. In John chapter 5, our Lord goes to the pool of Bethesda. Around this pool, if you skip down to verse 3, the Bible says, "There lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water." Here was a great number of sick people, lame people, and people who needed help. What does our Lord do?

He walks up to one man and heals him. You have to ask yourself, Did not our Lord have power to heal every one of those people? Of course He did. Why did He single out one man? Verse 5 says, "And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been a long time in that case, He said unto him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The impotent man answered, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." Jesus said unto him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Immediately the man was made whole, took up his bed, and walked; and the same day was the sabbath.

The Jews came to criticize and condemn him. Why did Jesus Christ single out one individual and heal him when a multitude was there, all needing healing? Jesus Christ certainly had power to heal every one of them, but He did not heal every one. He healed only one. Why? Let me show you.

Verse 17 says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In verse 18, they sought to kill Him because He had made Himself equal with God. Now look at verse 21: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."

What is the one attribute or characteristic of God that sets Him apart from anyone or anything else? God is absolutely sovereign. He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases, and whenever He pleases. The one attribute that singles God out as God is His absolute sovereignty. “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” Just as My Father is sovereign, so I am sovereign.

I do what I will, when I will, to whom I will, wherever I will. Why? “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” Why does the Father commit all judgment to the Son? “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”

Whenever you see the words even as, the Greek construction is so emphatic that it means literally equal to. So you could read verse 23 this way: all men should honour the Son equally as they honour the Father. Why? Because the Father is God and the Son is God. “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent him.”

What is it, then, when someone says, “Jesus Christ was a good man, a good example, or perhaps a martyr, but He was not God”? They are not honouring the Father, nor can they honour the Father, because they are dishonouring the Son. Therefore, they are not worshipping God, who has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord healed that one man to demonstrate His absolute sovereignty: He is God. The Father committed all judgment to Him so that all men may honour Him equally as they honour the Father.

Someone says, “You have your religion; I have mine.” No, it is not that. There is only one God, and He is the God who has revealed Himself in the totality of Scripture. If you reject what Scripture teaches, there is no way that you can worship the one true and living God. What you are worshipping is an idol, a figment of your imagination, a god of your rationality. You are not worshipping the God of the Bible.

Suppose you came to me and said, “Brother Weaver, you are my friend, but Alice is not. I really like you, but I do not like her at all. In

fact, I love you, but I do not love your wife." I would have to say, "Wait a minute. The only John Weaver who exists is the one who has Alice for a wife." What does Scripture say? The two are one flesh. When you say that you love me but do not love my wife, in reality you do not really love me, because the only John Weaver who exists is one married to Alice.

When you say, "I believe in God, but I do not believe that God is the Father of Jesus Christ, and I do not believe that Jesus Christ is God," what you are really saying is, "I am going to worship God the way I want to. I am not going to worship Him as He is revealed in Scripture, as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The Proper Pattern: Worship the Father Through the Son in the Spirit

All the other gods are idols. What did He say in Isaiah 42? "I am the Lord, and beside Me there is none other. And My glory will I not give to another." Listen carefully, because I do not want to be misunderstood. Jesus Christ is God. He is God in the flesh, according to 1 Timothy 3:16, John 1, and innumerable other passages in the Bible.

But worship which constantly terminates upon the Son, in its general mood and climate, is usually unacceptable worship. How can I say that? Do I not believe that Jesus Christ is God? Yes, I do. There are times when it is perfectly acceptable to worship Jesus Christ. Let me explain. Jesus Christ is God, but I want to show you what Scripture teaches about the proper way to worship.

What happened in John chapter 20? Our Lord revealed Himself to His disciples, but Thomas was not there. When the other disciples said, "The Lord has appeared to us," Thomas replied, "Except I see the print in His hands"—

Unless I take my hand and thrust it through his side, I will not believe. The next time they were together, Jesus Christ appeared. He said, "Thomas, take your finger and put it in my hand. Take your hand and put it in my side. See that it is I myself, and not a spirit." Did Thomas put his finger in his hand or his hand in his side? No.

What did he do? He fell on his face and said, “My Lord and my God.” Jesus Christ was worshipped as God, and it was totally acceptable.

In Revelation chapter 1, John heard a voice behind him and turned and looked. There was One girded about the waist with a golden girdle; His feet were as brass, and His hair was white as snow. What did John do? He fell at His feet as one dead. It was our Lord, and he worshipped. In Revelation 5, verses 6 and 12, Christ is worshipped.

Is it wrong to worship the Son? No. Is it wrong to worship the Holy Spirit? No. But Scripture teaches that the proper way to worship is to worship the Father through the Son in the Spirit. God is one; He has revealed Himself in three persons. There is absolutely no jealousy in the Godhead. Scripture teaches that we are to worship the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

In Ephesians chapter 2, verse 18, the context is Christ. Verse 13 says, “But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Verse 18 says, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” How do we get to the Father? Through Christ in the Spirit.

In Ephesians chapter 3, beginning in verse 14: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts”

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. How did He come to the Father? He came to the Father through Jesus Christ, and verse 16 says, in the Spirit. John 14, verse 6, says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh to the Father but by Me.” How do we get to the Father? Through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 7, verse 25, states it again: “Wherefore He, that is Christ, wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, or through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” How do we get to the Father? Through Jesus Christ.

You remember the story in Luke 11, when the disciples came and said, “Lord, teach us to pray.” It came to pass that he was praying in a certain place. When he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, “Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples.” And he said unto them, “When you pray, say, Dear Jesus.” Is that what he said? No. He said, “When you pray, say, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”

What was our Lord doing? Our Lord was saying that the way to worship God, the Father, and the way to get to God, the Father, is through Him. We quoted last week 1 Peter 3 and verse 18: Jesus Christ suffered, the just for the unjust. Why? That He might bring us back to God, that He might bring us back to God the Father.

Do you understand why an over-emphasis upon Christ, to the exclusion of the Father, is a wrong emphasis? You remember the Jesus movement, sometime in the 1960s. Everything was Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Is Jesus Christ God? Yes. But our Lord came to bring us back to the Father. It is proper to pray to our Lord. It is proper to pray to the Holy Spirit. But the overriding principle of Scripture is that we come to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Let me explain something to you in theological terms.

Romans 11:36 says, “For of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” For of Him—that is, originally; through Him—that is, providentially; and to Him—that is, ultimately—are all things.

In theology, when you talk about God, there are two terms: the ontological Trinity and the economical Trinity. The word ontological comes from the Greek word ontos, which simply means being. The ontological Trinity is the logical order of being. Thus we say Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The economical Trinity is the way that God works. If you study Scripture, you will find that everything is always out of the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. That is how creation was made; that is how everything comes. It is God’s order of movement: everything is of the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.

Our Lord is indeed a proper object of worship, and He should be worshipped. The Holy Spirit is indeed a proper object of worship,

and He should be worshipped. But the overriding principle of Scripture is that we worship the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

Worship the God Who Is Father of Believers

God is not only the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Godhead. God is also the Father of believers in the marvels of His grace. Ephesians 2:1 says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." Have you ever stopped to think about how merciful and gracious the Father has been to you in saving you? You look around and see other family members and friends who are unconverted.

My wife and I marvel sometimes at how God has preserved us. I told Mrs. Bowen that, come January, we will have been married forty-one years. Yet there are couples we graduated with who have been married and divorced, and married and divorced, four, five, and six times. You stop and think: Where in the world did the knowledge of truth come from, and the grace to persevere, and the grace to do what is right? The answer is that it all comes from God.

Had God not saved us, we too may have been ruined, still living ungodly, wicked lives, if God who came to us and made us His sons. In Galatians 3:13–14, we read: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, not from the law, but from the curse of the law. Being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. What was the curse of the law? The law demanded a personal obedience, a perfect obedience, and a perpetual obedience. If you did not give the law that which it demanded, then the penalty was death. Christ died as our substitute to free us from the penalty and the curse of the law. He redeemed us. He kept the law perfectly, and then He gave us His righteousness.

Galatians 4:4–7 tells us: "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the

adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father, wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

What did God do? God sent the Spirit into our hearts. We who were strangers and enemies, unconverted, were saved by His infinite grace. He made us His sons—sons by election, sons by adoption, sons by regeneration, sons by conversion. He put His Spirit in our hearts, whereby we acknowledge it and say, "Abba, Father." It is the most natural thing for a child of God to refer to his one true and living God as his Father.

I really like the word Abba. Abba is the Hebrew word, and it means Papa. It is a term of endearment, love, and trust. We refer to God as our heavenly Papa, or our heavenly Father.

This goes right along with Galatians 4:4–7. Notice Romans 8, beginning with verse 15: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." We have not received the spirit of fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

Now let me show you one of the most remarkable verses in the Bible, 1 John 3:1. This verse ought always to humble us and encourage us. John, contemplating the greatness and marvels of God's grace to His own, said, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

It is true that we must worship the one true and living God as He is revealed in the totality of Scripture. We must also worship that one true and living God who has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Godhead. But it is equally true that we must worship Him as our Father in the marvels of His grace. When we come to God, we come saying, "Father, it is a miracle

and a marvel that I am Your child. I do not deserve it, merit it, or earn it. But You chose me, saved me, and made me Your son."

Conclusion and Prayer

"Father, I come to Thee through the Lord Jesus Christ, whom You sent to be my Savior, my Redeemer, and my Lord. I come to You as Your son through the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, and I come to give You worship, honor, and homage." The proper object of worship is the one true and living God, who has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of believers. We must bring to God an ever-increasing knowledge of His person, character, and attributes, always humbled by the thought: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." What a tremendous thought: we are the sons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. That should motivate us to give our God the glory due unto His name.

Father, we thank Thee for Thy love and grace to us, for the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, Thy truth, and the ministry of Thy Word. We pray that Thou wouldst indeed teach us and enable us to give unto Thee the glory due unto Thy name. Enable us to worship Thee acceptably in spirit and in truth—not only as the one true and living God in the totality of the revelation of Thyself, but as the one God who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the marvels of His grace, may we come to Thee through the Son in the Spirit. In Thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Acceptable Worship

Part Three

For those who have not been here in the last couple of weeks, we have been doing a short series on the biblical doctrine of worship, acceptable worship, and we are reading from John 4, verses 19 through 26:

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

Review of Previous Messages

We have been dealing with the doctrine of acceptable worship. Let me take a few moments and review the last two messages. First of all, I pointed out in the first message that it is our duty to worship God. He is to be worshiped not only by virtue of a creation right, but also by virtue of a providential right, a redemption right, and a kingly right. So it is our duty and our obligation, as creatures, as subjects, and as redeemed ones, to worship the one true and living God.

The second thing I pointed out is that God is not indifferent as to how we worship Him. I showed you numerous passages where God says, "I hate, I despise, I will not have that worship." Over and over God said that, so it is not up to us to try to worship God any old way that we please. The third thing I pointed out was that acceptable worship is a matter of divine revelation. The same God that demands that we worship Him also tells us how we must worship Him. And fourthly, acceptable worship is a fruit of the work of Jesus Christ.

Last week we looked at the proper object of worship, and we will continue that message a little further this week. The proper object of worship, of course, is the one true and living God—not simply the one true and living God, but the one true and living God revealed as Father. Three times the Bible speaks in this short passage of God as Father.

We noticed how God was the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture, when Jesus Christ called God His Father, He was identifying Himself and claiming oneness with the essence of God. Therefore, in John 5 and numerous other passages, when He called God His Father, the Jews took up stones to stone Him. He said, "Many good works I've done; for which of these do you stone me?" They answered, "For a good work we stone thee not; but because thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

They understood what He meant. That is why He said in John chapter 10, "I and the Father are one."

A simple distinction in the person and work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has often been overlooked. I did not bring this

out last week, but I want to consider some questions that have been asked of me in time past. Many people have not been able to discern this distinction. Sometimes they turn to John 14, where our Lord says, "My Father is greater than I," and conclude that Jesus Christ cannot be God. They say, "Jesus Christ cannot be God, because here He says His Father is greater than He is."

Yet numerous other passages in the Bible, including John 1, John 10, 1 Timothy chapter 3, and numerous others, undeniably declare that Jesus Christ is God. If Jesus Christ is God, how can He say in one place, "My Father is greater than I"? We must remember that one of the terms used of Jesus Christ repeatedly in Scripture is that He was the sent One.

Philippians 2:5–7 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." When Jesus Christ came, He came as the Father's servant, the sent One. Over and over He says, "My Father hath sent me." In His relationship to the Father, considering Himself the Father's servant, He could truthfully say, "My Father is greater than I." But since Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, He could also truthfully say in John 10, "I and my Father are one," and in John 14, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Jesus Christ is God, but He came as a servant.

His position on earth was different from His position in eternity. There is a positional difference when our Lord was sent. Therefore, we must worship God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Godhead. Secondly, we must worship Him as the Father of believers in the marvels of His grace. Jesus Christ, in a unique sense, is the Son of the Father, the eternal Son of God; yet God has chosen, adopted, and made us His sons. The Bible says that He has sent His Spirit into our hearts, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

Scripture teaches that everything is out of the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. The proper way to worship God the Father is to come to God through Christ in the Spirit and give Him the worship that He demands. We must worship not only the one true and living

God who has revealed Himself as Father, but also the one true and living God who is, in and of Himself, Spirit.

God as Father and God as Spirit

Verse 24 says, "God is Spirit. And they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The word "a" in "God is a spirit" is in italics and is not in the original. Literally, the Greek is "pneuma ho theos"—Spirit is God. When the Bible says God is Spirit, it means that we must worship the one true and living God who has revealed Himself as Father, whose essence is that of Spirit.

The message I am bringing this morning is, in one sense, one of the most difficult. Why? Because we are lost when we begin conversing about the Godhead. How can I explain who God is when there is absolutely nothing to which I can compare God? There is no illustration that I can give you.

Yet we must understand something. Jesus Christ was using the biblical doctrine of worship, and He was discussing the spirituality of God with a fallen woman, an unsaved woman. Although you and I may not be able to comprehend everything about God, there are some things that we must understand if we are going to render acceptable worship to the One True and the Living God. Somehow we must grasp this simple fact: God is Spirit.

Let me begin by trying to show you the relationship between God as revealed as Father and God who is Spirit. When we talk about God as Father, that reveals to us the proper object of worship in His essential relationships. Let me say that again: when we talk about God as Father, that reveals to us the proper object of worship in His essential relationships. In that relationship, He is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that relationship, He is the Father of all those whom He adopts into His family. So when you approach God as Father, you are approaching God in a relationship. You are not approaching God as He is in His essence. What is the essence of God? The very essence of God is the fact that God is Spirit.

Let us look at this by way of illustration, with no endorsement of our president intended. If we were to talk about George W. Bush, we could say several things about him: he is president,

commander-in-chief, a husband, and a father. Those are four things about him, but all four are relationships. As president, he is president in relationship to the United States. As commander-in-chief, he is commander-in-chief in relationship to the armies. As a husband, he is in relationship to his wife, Laura. As a father, he is in relationship to his children.

Now let us look at the essence of George W. Bush. He is a man. He is an image-bearer. He is a creature. He is a sinner, a fallen son of Adam.

The Meaning of 'God is Spirit'

On the one hand, we have His relationships; on the other hand, His essence—that is, what He actually is, His being. He is a creature. He is a sinner. When we talk about God as Father, that is a relationship. When we say that God is Spirit, that is what He is in His essence and being. So He is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Godhead. He is the Father of believers in the marvels of His grace. Those are relationships. But in and of Himself, He is Spirit.

What does it mean that God is Spirit? First and foremost, it means that He is a spiritual being, pure, infinite, eternal, and uncreated. We must grasp this in some degree in order to worship God acceptably. The Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith states, in part, in its first paragraph, a statement on the doctrine of God: “The Lord our God is but one, only living and true God, whose subsistence is in and of himself, infinite in being and perfection, whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, who is eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute.” It continues, but notice especially the words, “a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions.” This statement is drawn from Scripture; there is Scripture behind everything said here.

The Westminster Confession of Faith is almost similar, saying that God is Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Each of these historical confessions of faith says that God is Spirit. Notice what the

Bible says very pointedly in verse 24: “God is Spirit. And they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” Our Lord is teaching this unsaved, fallen woman about the essence of God.

That ought to tell us something. Real Bible doctrine not only should be preached, but it ought to be preached, and it is also a means of evangelization. Here our Lord is evangelizing this woman with the doctrine of the essence of God, the spirituality of God.

This is connected with acceptable worship. The woman said, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.”

The Woman's Concern vs. Christ's Concern

She said, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain,” that is Mount Gerizim, “and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” This is the issue she placed before Him, concerning the place of worship. Now, let me show you what our Lord said. Jesus said unto her, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain,” that is Gerizim, “nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.” He then says, “God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

The woman was concerned about the distinction between Samaritan and Judahite worship: “We Samaritans worship at Gerizim. You Judahites, you worship down in Jerusalem.”

“Now, sir, I perceive you’re a prophet. If you are a prophet, then you can settle this age-old dispute between the Samaritans and the Judahites. Where is the proper place to worship? Should we worship in Mount Gerizim, or should we worship in Jerusalem, which is known as Mount Zion?”

The woman was concerned about where to worship and when to worship. Our Lord was concerned about who to worship and how to worship. Have you ever noticed what we do? We will ask someone, “Where do you go to church? What time do you start?” Certainly, you have to know those facts in order to attend some assembly of believers. But we never ask, “Who do you worship? And how do you worship?”

This woman was concerned about where and when, and our Lord was concerned about who and how. Our Lord is saying, “Look, if you

are going to worship God, you must not only worship God who has revealed Himself as Father, but you must worship God who is in and of Himself Spirit." What does that mean? It means that God is an immaterial or incorporeal being.

God's Omnipresence and Spirituality

Let me put that a little more plainly. God does not have a body. He does not have bodily parts. He does not have bodily passions, because God is Spirit. Since God is Spirit, there is no such thing as physical limitations to God. Once you begin to see that God is Spirit, then you understand a little more of the omnipresence of God. When we talk about the omnipresence of God, we are saying that God is everywhere at once in the totality of His being. Many people are confused about the omnipresence of God.

They will say, "Here is a part of God over in China. God is here in China. God is here in Russia. God is here in America. God is here in Cuba. God is over here. God is over here." If we take all these parts and put them together, then we have a whole God. No, that is not true. That is heresy. That is blasphemy. You cannot divide God. The doctrine of God's omnipresence is that God is everywhere at one time in the totality of His being. Since God is everywhere at one time in the totality of His being, He cannot be conceived of as just being in one place or limited to one place.

In 1 Kings 20, the Syrians had attacked Israel, and God had told Israel that they were going to defeat the Syrians; certainly, they did. Look at verse 23: "And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."

I want you to understand why the Syrians believed they lost the battle. They fought the Israelites in the hills, and they said the logical answer is this: "Their God happens to be the God of the hills. Let's fight against them down in the plain, and surely we will overcome them because their God is the God of the hills and therefore He cannot be the God of the plains." I want you to understand that the pagans had a limited concept of God because the pagans always

located God in their temple or in their shrine. They never understood that God was omnipresent.

Notice verse 28: “And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.” God said, “They are going to find out I am not just the God of the hills, I am the God of the valleys, I am everywhere in the totality of my being at one time.”

Now, you say, “But Brother Weaver, in the Old Testament, God was located in the tabernacle and in the temple.” No. I’ll explain that before I finish this series. It is true that God specifically revealed Himself in the tabernacle and specifically revealed Himself in the temple, but God was not located in the tabernacle, and God was not located in the temple. I want you to understand that even the Old Testament taught the spirituality of God.

Old Testament Teaching on God's Spirituality

Look in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 40. Let’s begin reading there with verse 15. This is a rather lengthy passage, so I want you to look at it and watch carefully what God says. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 15, says, “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” What are the nations in comparison to God? A drop in the bucket.

SCRIPTURE READING - Isaiah 40:15-28 (KJV)

> "And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn," that is, all the wood of Lebanon is not sufficient for an offering to God, "nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."
>
> "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"
>
> "The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that

will not rot;" in other words, the poor man doesn't use gold and silver. He gets him a good cedar tree. "He chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved."

"Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity."

"Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding."

God is saying, "To whom will you liken me? And what likeness will you compare me unto?" God said, "Let me tell you something, all the wood in Lebanon is not sufficient for a fire for me. All the beasts are not sufficient for a burnt offering. I am He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth. I made everything."

If God says, “How silly are you, how stupid are you, if you think that you are going to take My creation and make something to resemble Me when I created everything? How could My creation be less than Me? How could you take everything in creation and make it like unto Me? I am greater than My creation. I sit upon the circle of the earth.”

What is the Bible teaching? The Bible is teaching the spirituality of God. If you start trying to make an image of God, you will run out of silver and gold, because God created all of that. If you try to make one out of wood, you will run out of wood. God created all of that.

Jeremiah 23:23-24 says, “Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.” God is Spirit. God cannot be limited to physical places. Since God is Spirit, it is absolutely foolish to try to conceive of God in physical expressions.

That is why He said in Exodus 20, “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.”

I want you to understand the extreme blasphemy of idolatry. In Exodus 32, when Moses went up to the mount to receive the tablets from God, the Ten Commandments, he was gone forty days and forty nights. The people said, “Arise, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.”

Aaron took their golden earrings, threw them in the fire, and fashioned a molten calf. How could God, who is Spirit, be likened to a calf, which is creation? This shows the idolatry of Egypt, because the Egyptians worshipped the bull, Apis. And that was only the gold that the Israelites had. What about the rest of the gold? How could you take that which God created and make a likeness of God who created, when God is greater than His creation?

The Invisible God and Anthropomorphisms

In Colossians 1, we learn what God is like. If God were to manifest Himself on earth physically, what would He look like? Colossians 1:14-15 answers: we are in Christ, “in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” That is why Jesus Christ said to Thomas in John 14, “Thomas, he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Jesus Christ is God manifested in the flesh.

But notice that the Bible calls Him the image of the invisible God, and therefore God is the invisible God.

First Timothy 1:17 says, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” When we say that God is Spirit, it means He is immaterial and incorporeal. He does not have a body, bodily parts, or bodily passions. He is pure Spirit.

First Timothy 6, in the context of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, says: “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.”

So God is the invisible God. Someone may object, “Wait a minute, Brother Weaver. I read my Bible, and I know there are certain things in the Bible that indicate something otherwise than what you're trying to teach today. Because the Bible says, in Proverbs, chapter 15, I believe, that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good.” The Bible does say that. It also says that God brought Israel out of Egypt by His right hand, and that His feet walk upon the clouds.

Let me ask you a question. If God is Spirit, does God have eyes? No. If God is Spirit, does God have a right hand? Not physically, no. Does God have physical feet? No. How do you explain those passages? Those are what are known as anthropomorphisms. Sometimes we say, anthropomorphically speaking. “Anthropos” is the Greek word for man, and “morphe” is the Greek word for form. Anthropomorphic simply means “man-form speaking.” It means God is speaking in language which you and I can understand.

When we read about the eye of God, we understand that He is referring to His omniscience: He sees all and knows all. When we read about God’s right hand, we know that He is referring to His power. When we read about His feet, we understand His omnipresence, that God is everywhere. If God did not use that kind

of language for you and me, we would never be able to comprehend anything about God. If I explain anything to you, I have to use language that you understand.

We have clouded our minds so many times with things that are unscriptural that, when it comes to Scripture, we think what we hear possibly cannot be right. It is like old Vance Havner used to say: "Christians have lived subnormal for so long that whenever one gets normal, everyone else thinks he's abnormal." You could say the same thing about God. We have heard error for so long that, when we hear the truth, we think the truth is error.

The Sin of Idolatry and Mental Images

But God does not have a body. Romans 1 shows us why idolatry is so prevalent and desirable: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things."

What did they do in their ignorance, wickedness, and rebellion? They made them an idol. They materialized the immaterial God.

Why is that so important? Once you get your God materialized, you may live comfortably in your sins. Now you have your God in a specific location, a specific place. He is materialized and cannot be everywhere at once, so you may go somewhere else and do whatever you want to do. That was the pagan concept of a god, or their god.

Unhappily, it has also been adopted by the church. We have lost the understanding that God is Spirit. Since God is Spirit, He is omnipresent. He is everywhere at one time in the totality of His being, and He is omniscient.

Mel Trotter, who has been dead a number of years, was a drunk. He was such a sot that he stole the shoes off his baby and was going to pawn them to get a drink. On his way, he passed a gospel meeting where people were singing. The music attracted him, and he stood there and listened. A preacher got up and preached; he stayed and listened, and God saved him. Mel Trotter then began one of the

missions to salvage drunks and harlots and everybody else. He became a great preacher and a great Christian.

There was an area known as Lovers' Lane, where all kinds of immorality took place. Mel Trotter would go down there while the cars were parked and start preaching. Some would leave, some would not leave, some would laugh, and some would make fun. Then Mel Trotter got an idea. He had a neon sign made and erected it in Lovers' Lane. It was a giant blinking eye, and in the middle of that eye were the words, “Thou God seest me.” Lovers' Lane was cleared out and cleaned out, and folks never came back. Why? Because of the omniscience and omnipresence of God.

Since God is Spirit, He cannot be confined to a local place. You could say it like this: God's center is everywhere. His circumference is nowhere.

Psalm 139 teaches the omniscience, the omnipresence, and the spirituality of God. David said, “O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Now watch, thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.”

What is he saying? “God, I cannot get away from your presence. You are everywhere. You know my downsitting. You know my uprising. You understand my thought afar off. God, I cannot escape you.” Why? Because God is Spirit.

Our Lord is telling this fallen woman, “If you worship God acceptably, you must worship God not only as revealed as the Father

of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of believers; you must grasp to some extent that God is Spirit."

God Cannot Be Confined to a Place

Applications: God Cannot Be Confined or Sensed

Let me make some applications and show you how important this doctrine is. First of all, understand that since God is Spirit, He cannot be confined to special places or structures. The woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, Gerizim. But you say that Jerusalem is the place to worship. Where is God really?" She was asking Him, and our Lord says, "God is Spirit."

Paul taught the spirituality of God to the pagans on Mars Hill. In Acts 17:24–25 he says, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." Notice that he says, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." You cannot confine God to a temple, or to a shrine, or to a building.

Even Solomon, when he dedicated the temple in 1 Kings 8:27, said, "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built?" Solomon knew that the temple could not contain God. God could not be located, imprisoned in that building.

Isaiah 66:1–2 says, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Now watch what he asks: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" God said, "If the earth is nothing more than my footstool, and the heaven is my

throne, how could you ever hope to contain me or put me in a building?"

You go to Japan, and they have their shrines. You go to China, and they have their temples. You go to ancient Greece, to the Parthenon, and they had all their gods materialized, located in that Parthenon.

The One True Living God is not confined, nor can He be confined to a special building.

How has the church become pagan? Through what is known as the reduction of Christianity, or the heresy of churchism. Most Christians have never understood that God is Spirit and therefore cannot be confined to buildings, temples, and shrines. They are concerned about where to go to church, what time to be there, what to wear, and whom they will meet. Once they come, sing their songs, and hear the little sermonette, they go out and live how they please—totally disobeying God, violating His law, and refusing to hear His word.

Why? Because they have somehow gotten the idea that God is in the church building. When they enter it, they put on a pious front, an air of sanctification, and sit there like perfectly good, obedient little children; then they go out and live like the devil. They have left God in their little palace, temple, or church building. That is the reduction of Christianity to the church. It is true that we may worship Him in this building, but God is not confined to it.

One answer to the question asked of me this morning by Allison—Why are we in the mess that we are in?—is this: because of this heresy. We have failed to occupy, failed to do business, and failed to subdue the world to Jesus Christ in our occupations because we think that when we are at work, it is totally different from being in church. No, it is not.

There is no division between the secular and the sacred for the Christian. For the child of God, everything is sacred. My work is sacred, my worship is sacred, and my family is sacred. I am to do my job as unto the Lord, just as I am to worship as unto the Lord. When you think God is confined to a building, you have located your God and basically materialized Him, whether or not you have a literal idol. Most Christians want to leave God in the church building and

then live however they like. The next Sunday they return with their sanctimonious airs, feeling pious and happy. God says no. That is not the way to worship Him. If there is no righteousness, God is not pleased. Whatever we do, we do it as unto the Lord, if we understand that God is Spirit.

God Must Not Be Conceived by Physical or Mental Images

Secondly, God must not be conceived of either by literal physical images or by physical images of the mind. Cars do not begin in Detroit; they begin in the mind of some engineer. You know what we have done? We have made physical images and mental images of Christ or of God.

I was preaching in North Carolina, right before the service, when I noticed a woman arrive in her car. There was a little statue in the center of her dashboard, and it was moving a little bit. I wondered what in the world it was. When I got closer, I saw that it was a statue of Jesus. I said, "Ma'am, what is that statue doing on your dashboard?" She said, "Oh, that's my statue of Jesus. I wouldn't think of going anywhere without my Jesus." I said, "Ma'am, neither would I. But He lives in my heart, not on my dashboard."

I pastored a church not too far from here, and when I went into that church building, they had pictures of Jesus everywhere—with the long hair. I got the biggest, strongest deacon I could find and said, "Follow me." He walked behind me as I took every picture off the wall and handed them to him. He said, "What do you want me to do with these?" I said, "I want you to tear up the pictures. You can save the frames if you can use them. I don't care."

Why did I do that? Let me show you why. Deuteronomy chapter 4, beginning in verse 12, says, "And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice."

And by the way, I hope everybody here knows that Jesus Christ did not have long hair. The Caesar's cut was the style in His day, which was short hair, and the Bible says, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" It is

a shame for a man. If it is a shame for a man, our Lord never had long hair. That is all there is to it.

If a Flemish artist paints a picture of Christ, Christ looks Flemish. If a Dutchman paints Him, He looks Dutch. If a Frenchman paints Him, He looks French. Have you ever noticed that?

He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. God says, “Don’t make you any pictures or any images of Me.”

Numbers 33:52 says, “Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places.”

There is a difference, I believe, between religious art and trying to use art as a medium of worship. Unhappily, most people cannot make that distinction. When they pray to Jesus, I have had them tell me, “Well, I like to imagine the picture of Jesus in my mind.” Well, what picture do you imagine in your mind? I will tell you which picture you imagine: the one that you have always seen, but instead of there looking with the long hair. That is mental idolatry. Jesus Christ did not look like that, nor does He look like that. No one even knows what He looks like. When you try to imagine in your mind some mental picture of a faceless man standing there, just the light shining from the— that is still idolatry. Jesus Christ was a literal

man, and He had a literal face. You simply do not know what He looks like.

Whenever you begin to try to conceive of God in any physical image, even a mental image, it is idolatry. What we must do is conceive of God as He has revealed Himself in the Bible, not as how we imagine Him. There can be no physical image of God; therefore, we should not have some mental image of some face that we are familiar with and put that on Christ. We do not know what Christ looked like.

Worship Must Be Internal, Not Merely External

Here is the third thing. Since God is Spirit, God will never be pleased with the mere physical aspects of worship. Plopping yourself down in a chair, shouting or singing as loud as you can, does not necessarily please God. That is all physical. God is not interested in pomp, but rather in purity; not in sacrifice, but a broken spirit; not in holy water, but penitent tears; not in ceremonies, but reality. What did David say in Psalm 51? He said, "Sacrifice and burnt offering thou wouldest not; else would I give it thee. But a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

I get so tickled at people. There are people today who still worship Elvis Presley. You know that, do you not? I go to their home, and they say, "Oh, I want you to listen to Elvis sing this hymn." I do not want to hear Elvis sing that hymn. I would rather hear someone sing a hymn who had a heart for God but had no voice than hear the most beautiful voice in the world from someone who had no heart for God.

Do you understand what I am saying? We put the emphasis on the external. God places it on the internal. God says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." Why? "For out of it are the issues of life." God wants our heartfelt worship. It is not the physical aspect. It is not the singing, the shouting, the loud voice, or anything physical that satisfies God. It is that which is spiritual, as He is.

Since God is Spirit, He cannot be sensed with our five senses. You cannot taste God, touch God, smell God, hear God physically, or see God physically. You cannot sense God with your five senses.

You may say, “Wait a minute, brother. There have been times that I’ve sensed the presence of God, and I’ve wept and shouted.” Hold on. That is a physical or emotional response when we perceive something by faith. Just because you had a physical or emotional response does not mean that you felt God. I cannot taste Him, touch Him, or feel Him. Why? God is Spirit.

When God moves on my soul or heart, I might laugh or cry, but I am not literally feeling God. I perceive God by faith. In fact, that is what the Bible says: we perceive Him by faith. Whenever we perceive Him by faith, there is usually an emotional response, and there may even be a physical response. But that does not mean that I am feeling Him with my five senses. It is faith and not feelings.

I have been around people who say, “Whoo! I just felt the Lord.” No, you did not feel the Lord. You may have perceived Him by faith and had an emotional response. Do you see the difference? God is Spirit, and since God is Spirit, He cannot be perceived with the five senses. We perceive Him by faith; we may have an emotional or physical response to that perception, but we are not experiencing Him with our five senses. And, by the way, when God does speak to us, it is through His Word.

We do not hear Him audibly as such. We hear Him in our souls, hearts, spirits, and minds through His Word, but we are not hearing Him with our ears as such. God is Spirit. That means, as I will deal with next week, that since God is Spirit, we must worship Him in spirit. “What is involved in that?” Lord willing, I will explain next week. But listen to this: the Scripture tells us, “Walk in the Spirit, and not in the flesh.” Since God is Spirit, we must walk in spirit.

How many of you have had spiritual legs to get up and walk somewhere? No. You walk with your physical legs. But there is a walking in the spirit, and that walking in the spirit, which I will deal with next week, is walking in conformity to the Word of God. You and I have got to understand, to some degree, what it means to worship God in spirit and in truth. In order to do that, we must understand that God is Spirit.

Let me show you one quick application. Look in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 9. I think every one of you can identify with this:

“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” God is here called the Father of spirits.

How many parents have had a child do something wrong, disciplined that child, and seen the child straighten up and stop doing what you did not want him to do? Yet you could tell that child was seething on the inside. Just let him get out of your presence, and he would start back doing it again. What did you do? You got the outside straightened up, but you did not get the inside straightened out.

If we are going to be in subjection to the Father of spirits, what does that mean? We cannot just have the external right; we must have the internal right. Everybody has heard the old story about the mother driving her car while her daughter kept standing up in the seat. She kept telling her to sit down. Finally, she jerked the daughter down and said, “If you stand up again, I'm going to whip you until you can't walk.” The little girl sat there for a few moments and said, “Mama, I may be sitting here on my fanny, but I'm standing up on the inside.” What was she saying? She was in rebellion.

What God is saying is that, if we understand God is Spirit, there can be no rebellion on the inside. We must be in submission to Him in our spirits, for He is Spirit.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ today that You help us, build us up in the most holy faith, and grant to us a grasp of the wonderful, gracious truth that Thou art the God who is Spirit, pure, infinite, eternal, immortal, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. God, help us to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Acceptable Worship

Part Four

John 4:19: “The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when you shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. You worship you know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah is cometh, who is called Christ.”

Review of Previous Messages

“When he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee, am he.”

In the first message, I pointed out that it is our duty and obligation to worship God. We are duty bound and obligated to

worship Him not only by virtue of creation—He is the Creator, and we are the creature. There is a creation right. We are also duty bound and obligated to worship Him because of a providential right that He has. This is providence that sustains us, preserves us, and protects us.

We are also duty bound because of a redemption right. He has redeemed us; we are His people. Then we are duty bound to worship Him because of a kingship right. He is King of kings and Lord of lords, and deserves all of our worship.

God is not indifferent as to how we worship Him, because many times in Scripture God says, "I hate, I despise, I will not have your sacrifice and your worship." Acceptable worship is a matter of divine revelation. We must worship God, not just any old way we please—not by subjectivism, rationalism, sentimentalism, or pragmatism—but based upon the Word of God. Acceptable worship is also a fruit of the work of Jesus Christ.

The proper object of worship, first of all, is the one true and living God—not simply God in a general theistic sense, but the one true and living God as He has revealed Himself in the totality of Scripture. First of all, He has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Godhead.

When Jesus Christ called God Father, it was not in the same sense that we call Him Father. When Jesus Christ referred to God as His Father, it was an acknowledgment of His oneness, the sameness of essence, that He Himself was and is God. Of course, that is what He said in John 10:30: "I and my Father are one." God has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, the early Christians worshipped God as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was also the Father of believers in the marvels of His grace.

In Galatians chapter 4, we find that in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Because you are sons, He has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby you cry, "Abba, Father." Very obviously, then,

we are now sons in the marvels of His grace. We must worship the one true and living God, who is in and of Himself Spirit.

There is a difference between a relationship and the essence of an individual. When we refer to God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ or the Father of believers, those refer to a relationship. But when you worship God who is spirit, that is what God is in and of himself. That is his essence. God is spirit. Since God is spirit, he is invisible. He is referred to over and over as the invisible God.

Secondly, God is also immaterial, that is, incorporeal. He does not have a body, nor does he have bodily parts or passions. Whenever you read about the eyes of God, the hand of God, or the right arm of God, those are anthropomorphic terms. Anthropos is the Greek word for man, and morphe is the Greek word for form; anthropomorphic simply means man-form speaking. It is language put in a form that we can grasp and understand. Thus, when you read about the eye of God, it refers to God's omniscience. When you read about the right hand or the right arm of God, it refers to God's omnipotence, his power.

When you refer to the feet of God, it is the omnipresence of God: God is everywhere at once in the totality of his being. We must understand, in some sense of the word, that God is spirit. He is not simply the one true and living God. He is the God who is the Father of the Lord Jesus and the Father of believers, but in and of himself, he is spirit. Any worship that does not come to God in the totality of scriptural revelation—that is, as the one true and living God, as the Father of the Lord Jesus, as the Father of believers, and as the God who is in and of himself spirit—would be classified as unacceptable worship.

The Incomprehensibility of God and Our Need for True Conceptions

Stephen Charnock was a Puritan who had been dead for hundreds of years. In his two-volume work, The Existence and the Attributes of God, he wrote: "We cannot have an adequate or a suitable conception of God. He, that is God, dwells in inaccessible light, inaccessible to the acuteness of our fancy as well as the weakness of

our sense. If we could have thoughts of Him as high and as excellent as His nature, our conception must be as infinite as His nature."

In Matthew 11, verse 27, let me reread the latter part of that sentence of Charnock: "If we could have thoughts of Him as high and as excellent as His nature, our conceptions must be as infinite as His nature." What is he saying? If we can have thoughts of God the way He should be thought of, then we would have to be God ourselves, because only God can comprehend God.

That is why, in Matthew 11, verse 27, our Lord says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father. And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Only the Son knows the Father, and only the Father knows the Son totally, completely, and fully. Why? Because the Father is God, and the Son is God. This is what Charnock is saying: if we were to have thoughts as excellent as His nature is, we would have to be as infinite as His nature.

Consider the greatness, the absolute greatness, of the one true and living God. One of our problems on this earth is that we do not understand some things; another problem is that we are forgetful—extremely forgetful. Like when you walk into the other room and think, Why did I come here? You understand that. But stop and think about this: when the eternal state comes and we are in resurrected, glorified bodies with perfect minds and perfect memories, whatever we hear, we will understand and comprehend, and we will never, ever forget it.

In eternity, we will be forever learning truth about our great and glorious God, yet never, ever fully comprehending Him. Think about that: an eternity of knowing truth, retaining truth, and never forgetting truth, yet never fully comprehending God, because only God can comprehend God.

Now listen to what Charnock says: “All of our imaginations of Him cannot represent Him, because every created species is finite. It cannot therefore represent to us a full and substantial notion to one who is infinite.” Stop and think about that thought. If every individual who has ever lived, who is now living, and who shall ever live could have an accurate imagination and thought of God, and all

of those imaginations and accurate thoughts were put together, it still would not be a total, full, or complete portrayal of God. Why? Because all of us are finite and God is infinite. The finite cannot comprehend the infinite.

Now listen to the important part: “Though we cannot have an adequate conception of God, we must not content ourselves without any conception of Him.” Just because you cannot comprehend God fully, totally, and completely does not mean that you cannot have any conception of Him. It is our sin not to endeavor after a true notion of Him. It is our weakness that we cannot attain a full notion of Him.

Angels cannot entertain a full knowledge of God, even though they have not sinned. It is their nature as angels not to be able to have a full knowledge of Him, but they can have an accurate knowledge of what they do know. We must realize, on the one hand, that we will never fully, totally, and completely comprehend God. Although we cannot have a perfect knowledge of Him, that does not mean we cannot have an accurate knowledge of Him in what we do know. It is our sin not to seek after that true knowledge of God, and it is our weakness that we cannot attain a full knowledge of God. Even angels, who have never sinned, do not have a full knowledge of God.

Go back in your Bibles to John chapter 4, because our Lord said in verse 24 that God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. We may not be able to comprehend God fully as He is, but we must never fancy Him for what He is not. God is spirit. The proper object of worship is the one true and living God, who has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus, the Father of believers, and the God who is spirit. He is immaterial, invisible, and incorporeal; that is, He does not have bodily parts. Now that we know who is the proper object of worship, what is the proper sphere of worship?

The Proper Sphere of Worship: Not Geography but Spirit and Truth

In verse 21, Jesus said unto her, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when you shall neither in this mountain,” that is, Mount

Gerizim, “nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.” Verse 21 refers to a geographical sphere. Our Lord is saying that the true sphere of worship has nothing to do with geography. It is not where we worship, but who we worship that counts. It is not when we worship, but how we worship that counts. In other words, it has to do with our understanding and our attitude. God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The true worship of God is bounded by spirit—worship in spirit—and worship in truth. God has said, “Here is the direction in which you are to go to give Me My proper worship.” You must worship, on the one hand, in spirit, and you must worship, on the other hand, in truth. This shows how important this is.

In verse 23, our Lord says, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” Note that the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. “For the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” The same truth is repeated twice, in two distinct verses. Verse 23 says, “the Father seeketh such to worship him in spirit and truth.” Then verse 24 says, “they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Worship in Spirit and Truth as the Result of Christ's Final Revelation

Our Lord says, “But the hour cometh,” and then, “and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him.” Worship in spirit and truth is the result of the final revelation of God in Christ. He says the hour is coming, and then he says, “and now is.”

Before Jesus Christ came, all of the Old Testament, especially in relationship to the tabernacle and the temple, consisted of types, emblems, and shadows. These things were not reality. Hebrews 1:1–3 says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers or different manners, spake in time past in the fathers by the prophets.”

How did God speak in times past to the people through the prophets? Sometimes he gave the message directly to the prophets.

Sometimes there were visions; sometimes there were dreams. There were all kinds of ways God spoke to those prophets. Now, is God doing the same thing today? The answer is no. The Bible says, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners, different ways, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the expressed image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

How has God spoken to us in these last days? Through His Son. Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God. There is no other revelation to come. Anyone who will not trust in Jesus Christ will never be converted or saved. There is no other Savior, nor will there be any additional Saviors or additional revelations. Jesus Christ is the full, final revelation of God.

Our Lord was alive when He was talking in John 4. He said, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming." It was not yet here because He was still alive. He had not yet given Himself as a sacrifice or completed His Father's mission. But the hour was coming, and now He was here to complete it: "When the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Why? Because Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God.

Look in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 1: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offer year by year continue to make the comers therein too perfect." Those ceremonial laws never made anyone perfect. They were merely types, emblems, and shadows. In verse 9, he says, "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that it may establish the second."

All those Old Testament ceremonies around the tabernacle and the temple were done away with. Why? Because now we have reality in Christ, the fullness of truth in Jesus Christ. Worship in spirit and in truth is a direct result of the full and final revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Thus He said in John 4, "Woman, believe me, the hour

is coming and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

Now, the second casual observation: in John 4:23, He says, "But the hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." True worship and true worshippers are a fruit of the Father's seeking grace. It is the Father who seeks true worship and true worshippers. This whole story about the woman at the well stems from this truth. Go back to John 4:3.

True Worship as a Fruit of the Father's Seeking Grace

Christ left Judea and departed again to Galilee, and he must needs go through Samaria. Why must he needs go through Samaria to find this woman? She was not seeking him; she did not even know who he was. When he asked her for a drink of water, she said, "How is it that you being a Judahite asked to drink of me, a woman of Samaria, for the Judahites have no dealing with the Samaritans." He said, "Woman, if you knew who it was who said, Give me water to drink, you would have asked of me living water." She did not even know who he was. She was not seeking him. He was seeking her.

I remember preaching in a church in Greenville, South Carolina. I arrived a little early, as I always try to do, and found a woman behind the pulpit singing a special. She had a beautiful voice and was singing, "I found him. I found him."

When she finished, I said, "You know, there is only one thing wrong with that song." She asked what it was. I said, "It is unscriptural. You did not find him. You were not even looking for him. Read Romans chapter 3: There is none that doeth good. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. They are all going out of the way. No, not one."

Then she began singing, "He found me." Now you have it right. He found you; you did not find Him. Look at Luke 19, verse 10: "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." The Son of Man does not simply do the saving; He does the seeking as well. What did He do in Luke 15? He went after that one lost sheep. And he sought it, how long did he found it? Then he brought it home.

The truth of the matter is that true worship is a result of the Father's seeking grace. Let me give you two theological terms: monergism and synergism. Synergism is a heresy. Sin, SYN, means together; ergo is the Greek word to work. Synergism simply means that the sinner works together with God in order to his salvation. Mono means one or alone, and ergo is to work. Monergism means that God works alone in salvation. Who initiated, planned, and determined salvation? It was God.

Who was it that sent Christ? It was God the Father. Who redeemed us? It was God, through His Son Jesus Christ. Who convicts us? It is God the Holy Spirit. The work of salvation is the work of God. We may respond to God's grace and salvation, and we may come willingly when He convicts and regenerates us, but we do not help Him save us. Salvation is the work of God. In fact, Jonah 2 says that salvation is of the Lord.

Therefore, it is very obviously the Father who seeks true worship and true worshipers. John 4:24 says, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Here is the absolute necessity of spiritual and truthful worship. Those who worship God acceptably must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

To understand the inherent meaning of this term, we must compare Gerizim worship and Jerusalem worship. In verse 21, our Lord said, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain,” Gerizim, where the Samaritans worshiped, “nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” Our Lord was giving a comparison between Gerizim worship and Jerusalem worship. What was the mark of Gerizim worship? It was sincere, but ignorant, worship. In verse 22 He told the woman, “Ye worship ye know not what.” She may have been sincere, but she was totally ignorant when it came to worship.

Contrasting Gerizim and Jerusalem Worship

Gerizim worship was sincere, but ignorant worship. When the Samaritan temple was destroyed, they continued to worship on Mount Gerizim. They continued to sacrifice there and continued with their own priesthood. The Samaritans received only the Pentateuch as the Word of God—that is, the first five books of Moses.

They rejected the historical books, the minor prophets, and the major prophets. Thus our Lord said, “Ye worship ye know not what.”

The mark of Gerizim worship is sincere but ignorant worship: zeal without knowledge, sincerity without truth. I have heard people say all my life, “It doesn't really matter what you believe, just so you're sincere.” Have you ever heard that?

I'll tell you what I can do. I can put some strychnine in a Coca-Cola and hand it to you, and you can sincerely believe that you're drinking Coca-Cola. But in just a little while, you're going to be sincerely dead. Your sincerity does not help you.

One of my favorite stories was related by Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones. Years ago, I got to meet Dr. Jones before he died. He was from England, a tremendous scholar and preacher. He was a medical doctor whom God called to preach, and he became one of the greatest expositors of Scripture I've ever known, never read behind. He told about a huge fire that happened in a warehouse in London. People formed a bucket brigade, passing buckets of water and trying to put out the fire.

One man, who happened to be a blacksmith, ran into the building with his blacksmith hammer, a big sledgehammer, and started beating on an iron beam that was already hot. Finally, one man stopped him and said, “What are you doing?” He said, “I'm trying to bend this beam.” The man replied, “If you succeed in bending that beam, you're going to bring this building down upon us. What are you doing?” The blacksmith stopped and said, “Well, I don't really know. But under the circumstances, I thought I ought to be doing something.”

That is a picture of what you and I would call Gerizim worship. It's sincerity without truth. It is sincere, but absolutely ignorant.

Now, let me stop before I make some comparisons. What was Jerusalem worship? Jerusalem worship was intelligent worship. He said in verse 22, “We know what we worship.” It was truth without heart, truth without sincerity, truth without genuineness. Maybe orthodox, maybe fundamental, but with no reality.

Do you remember the Pharisees and the Sadducees? Both groups were really wrong. But if you were to ask which group was the most

fundamental, you'd have to say the Pharisees. The Sadducees did not even believe in the resurrection from the dead, and they didn't believe in angels. The Pharisees believed in both. Here you have Jerusalem worship. They may have had the truth, but they perverted it. They may have professed to believe the truth, but they never applied it. The Pharisees gave, but only to be seen of men; they prayed, but only to be heard of men; they fasted, but only for show. They had a form of the truth, but lacked the heart and power of the truth. On the one hand, you have Gerizim worship, sincere but ignorant. On the other hand, Jerusalem worship is truth, but dead truth.

The woman said, “You’re a prophet. You can tell us where the right place is to worship. Do we worship here in Gerizim, or at Jerusalem?” Our Lord answered, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming, and now is, when you shall neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father. You don’t even know what you’re worshiping. We know what we worship. But the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

The right sphere of worship is not sincere but ignorant worship, nor is it truthless and dead worship. It is worship in spirit and in truth. There must be a going out of the heart, not just a lifting up of the hands; a pouring forth of the spirit, not just words; and a lifting up of the mind and soul. In other words, the spirit of man must be active. The Scriptures teach us whom, when, and what to worship, but they also teach us how to worship. Therefore, all formalism, hypocrisy, ritualism, ceremonialism, and churchism must go. We must have real, genuine worship.

No sentimentalism, no ignorance, no idolatry, no traditionalism. You must worship the Father in spirit. What are the two greatest hindrances to true worship? One is obvious: idolatry. The second is formalism. Gerizim and Jerusalem are symbolic of all that is abominable and unacceptable to God. You had sincere but ignorant worship, and you had truth but dead worship.

Think with me about people who worship sincerely but ignorantly. Look at the Mormons. Some of those folks are among the most moral, kind, gracious people that exist today. But they believe that Jesus Christ and Satan were brothers, and that somehow they

are going to be their own God. Look at the Roman Catholics. Some Roman Catholics, especially in other pagan countries, pierce themselves. They crawl on crushed glass. Some even crucify themselves or have themselves crucified, trying to atone for their own sins.

Look at the Muslims. They pray five times a day. They are sincere, but it is totally ignorant worship and unacceptable because it is not directed to the one true and living God who has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of believers, and the God who is Spirit. They are ignorant of Him and ignorant of His Word. They may be sincere, but they are in ignorance.

Usually, in all of these groups, you will find either a rejection of Scripture, a rejection of part of Scripture, or an adding to Scripture. Hold John 4 and look in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 23. Notice, beginning in verse 29: “Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh rock in pieces?” God's Word is truth. “Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbor.” That is, they are taking from the Word of God. Verse 31: “Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues and say, He saith,” which is adding to the Word of God. “Behold, I'm against them that prophesy false dreams of the Lord and do tell them and cause my people to err by their lies and by their likeness.”

“Yet I sent them not nor commanded them. Therefore, they shall not profit this people at all, said the Lord.” That is substituting for the word of God. So God said, “I'm against those who take from my word. I'm against those who add to my word. I'm against those who substitute for my word.” You look at all these other groups. They either add to, take from, or substitute for the word of God.

You see, folks, our Lord is saying that real, genuine worship is worship in spirit. It is not Gerizim worship sincerely, but ignorantly. It is not Jerusalem worship: “We've got truth,” but cold, dead, and barren. I marvel at the fact that there are so many churches in this country that profess to be Christian churches and profess to love the Lord and love the truth, and yet are so absolutely eaten up with ignorance of the Bible. It is pathetic. How in the world can you please God if you don't even know who He is or what pleases Him?

How in the world do you think that God, who is spirit, is going to be satisfied with plopping our bodies on a pew, pitching in a quarter, singing to Him, listening to a sermon, and going out just as unaffected and unmoved as when we came in? How could that ever please God?

A good friend recently wrote me about what I said concerning music. He said, “I don't want any of this cold, dead music either.” That is true. You may have a hymn grounded in theology, but that does not mean you have to sing it formally, coldly, or deadly.

If you understood truth, you would be worshiping God in spirit. I am not saying experience at any cost; I am not saying that at all. But we are not to have rigid formalism at any cost either. We must have what our Lord talks about: worship in spirit and truth.

Since God is spirit, we must worship Him in that part of our being which is most like Him. What is that part of our being? It is our spirit.

What It Means to Worship in Spirit

Look in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians, chapter 4. Let us begin reading with verse 23.

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” That part of us which is nonmaterial, the part which is the moral image of God—our spirits—is that with which we are to worship the God who is spirit. We must draw near to Him with our spirit, for He is spirit.

Let me make a distinction for you. Look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 1. I do not suppose there was a greater preacher than the Apostle Paul, other than our Lord Himself. In verse 8, Paul said, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” Paul was a southerner. Then he says, “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit and the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.”

Paul said he served God with his spirit. Do you think Paul simply floated around the Roman Empire? Of course not. If Paul got where

he was going, he walked, rode a horse, or rode a chariot. He used his legs and his body. His physical voice was doing the preaching, and his physical hands were doing the ministering. But although he was using his body, he was serving God with his spirit. There was a spiritual energy, a totality of his being, motivating and pushing his body.

So when we worship God in our spirit, it is not that we simply sit there and say, “I am going to let my little spirit do it today. I do not have to do anything.” No. It is our spirit that moves our bodies and motivates our minds. As 2 Corinthians 7:1 says, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” God does not want you merely to quit fornicating, lying, stealing, or getting drunk. Those are works of the flesh.

He wants your attitude right. He wants your disposition right. I've seen some of the straightest Christians with the most ugly and hateful attitude you've ever seen in your life, and I'd much prefer to be around some of the unsaved than to be around them.

God is saying that it is not just our external that must be right; it is our internal as well. Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. The sphere of true worship, first and foremost, means that we worship in spirit. That means we are holy and totally and completely engaged in our worship of God—our mind, our heart, and our will.

David said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul. And all that is within me bless his holy name.” Suppose David happened to be at the tabernacle. He could say, “I've got my body in the right place. This is where I should be. But now, I must worship God with my spirit.” So, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me”—everything that I am, will, spirit, soul, and mind—“by everything, I'm going to worship God.” I'm not going to sit there like a nut on a lock. Do you understand that when we worship God, our minds are active?

The psalmist said, “Oh, clap your hands, all you people shouting to God with the voice of triumph.” Now, that's expressive, isn't it? I mean, man clapping, shouting. “God is going up with a shout, the

Lord with the sound of a trumpet." Well, that's expressive. "Sing praises to God. Sing praises. Sing praises to our King. Sing praises." That's expressive too. Ah, but look at verse 7: "For God is the King of all the earth. Sing ye praises with what?" It doesn't do you a bit of good to sing and shout if there's no understanding.

If you do not know what you are doing or saying, and if your spirit is not involved in it, then you need understanding. "Sing ye praises with understanding." If we are going to give God praise and worship Him in our spirit, we must understand something about His person. The Bible says, "God is great, and greatly to be feared." How can you praise God, who is great in Himself, without knowing something of His greatness? How can you praise Him for His mighty works, which the Bible says we are to do, if you do not even know what those works are?

We should praise Him not only for creation, but also for providence and redemption, and for the approach He has given us. When I come to praise God, if my spirit is involved, my mind is active. Hebrews 10 says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He had consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having a high priesthood over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance."

Now stop and think. The Old Testament saints did not have what we have. They could not run into the tabernacle or enter into the holiest of all. Neither could those in the temple do that. But here, under the new covenant and under the blood of Jesus Christ, we may boldly approach God the Father. When we worship God, we need not only to think of God's person and God's works; we can also meditate upon the way of approach He has given us.

Psalm 86 shows several things in which your mind and spirit may be engaged: "For thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. Now watch. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer and attend to the voice of my supplications. And the day of my trouble I will call upon thee, for thou wilt answer me. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy works."

Do you see what the psalmist is doing? He is praising God and meditating upon God. He says, “There’s no God like you. There’s no works like your works.” Verse 9 says, “All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee.” There is God’s sovereignty and providential control. “O Lord, thou and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great and doest wondrous things. For thou art God alone. Teach me, O Lord, and I will walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name.” He said, “God, don’t let me give you any half-hearted worship. Unite my heart to fear thy name. Let me praise you, Lord, with all of my heart.” I’m going to tell you, the curse of this day and age among Christians is that we are rendering to God a half-hearted worship. You compare what your experience at church is like with what your experience at a football game is like. If you go to a football game, you are as serious as most folks are about football.

Prerequisites for Spiritual Worship

When people go to a football game, they stand, cheer, root, cry, beg, pray, and go crazy. They want that team to win more than anything else. Then they come to church and simply sit there. There is no going out of the spirit, no concentrating in the mind upon the Word of God or the attributes of God, and no considering His providential blessing and control. People give greater worship to a football than they do God.

I am not saying we are to have a stomping, hand-clapping, pew-climbing service. What I am saying is that our spirits, our hearts, the totality of our being, ought to be so engaged in worship. Like when you come from a football game, you are exhilarated, especially if you're team one, and exhausted. When you get through with church, you ought to be exhilarated because you worshiped God, and you ought also to be exhausted.

There is no work like mental work. I would rather dig a ditch than have to exercise my mind and study and dig. If you really force your mind in a service, when you get through, you are going to be tired and exhausted.

Prerequisites for Spiritual Worship

Let me give you three prerequisites for spiritual worship. The first is obvious: you must be spiritually alive. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins.” You cannot give God the worship He deserves, nor can you worship in spirit, unless you have been quickened by the Spirit. What did our Lord tell Nicodemus? “Verily, verily, I say unto you, you must be born again.” The Greek word is anothen: you must be born from above. No man can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born from above. You cannot give God the worship He demands unless you have been made alive in Jesus Christ. Thus, the call to worship is also a call to repentance and faith—to turn from your sins and believe in Jesus Christ. You must be spiritually alive. Secondly, you must be spiritually assisted.

Whose responsibility is it to worship God aright? Yours. Now, how many of you, in and of yourself, can worship Him aright? None. Our Lord said in John 15, "Without me, you can do nothing." You know what the Bible says in Romans 8 about the Spirit? "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit Himself makes an intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." What does the Holy Spirit do? He enables us. He helps us.

He assists us in prayer, in study, and in worship. The psalmist said in Psalm 80 and verse 18, "Quicken us, and we shall call upon thy name." Many times the psalmist said, "Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned." If God does not turn you, you do not get turned. If God does not quicken you, you do not get quickened. We must come to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. The true worshippers, he said in Philippians 3 and verse 3, are those who worship Him in the Spirit.

We must be spiritually alive, spiritually assisted, and, thirdly, spiritually active. The divine energy of the Spirit and the human activity of the saint are concurrent realities; that simply means they happen at the same time. In Philippians 2, the apostle says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," verse 12. But verse 13 says, "for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do His

good pleasure." God works it in; we work it out. You cannot work it out unless God is working it in.

What does this mean? When we get here physically, we must consciously and deliberately turn our minds from things, from objects, and from planning what we are going to do tomorrow or next week. We must focus our minds upon God, upon His Word, and upon His truth, asking God to assist us, to enable us, and to give Him the honor and glory He deserves.

Many times we do not get to see each other for a week, and fellowship and conversation are wonderful. But there comes a time when we have to cut out the conversation and the fellowship and say, "I came to worship God." We have to say, "Lord, I want to give You my thoughts. I want to give You my spirit."

Physical weariness will always cause a spiritual sluggishness. I will tell you this before I close this series: I have always, always gone to bed early on Saturday nights, unless I have been providentially hindered. My wife tells you I go to bed early every night. That is true. I am more of a morning person; I am not a night person. I even told my girls, when they were courting, “You be in by eleven o’clock. You are not staying out all night, especially on Saturday night.” I want to be fresh for Sunday morning. You cannot concentrate when you have not had any sleep. I have seen people sleep in the service. I have seen some sleep here.

It is one thing if some of you doctors have been out on an emergency call or are doing emergency work. But just because you stayed up to watch the Late Late Show, that is a horse of a different color. I have had people in time past say, “Pastor, forgive me, I was so sleepy today.” My unusual response is, “Well, I will if God will.” God knows why you were sleepy.

When we come, it involves the totality of our being. You say, “I do not know a bunch of Scripture.” Well, you ought to learn some. “I do not know about God’s attributes.” Well, you ought to learn some. “I do not know too much.” Well, I will tell you what you can do: You can at least praise God and be thankful that you are not in the hospital, that you are not in the morgue, that you are not sick, that you have a family, that you have a husband and a wife. You can

thank Him that you have food and clothing and are still in your right mind.

There is enough upon which we can concentrate and bless the Lord of my soul with all my being, with everything that I am. Now let me make a couple of applications. The first one is this, and I do want to make sure you understand it. I have heard it all my life: “Pastor, if you go to church to get a blessing, you will go away with a blessing.”

Applications: Worship as Giving, Not Getting

I do not doubt that we are blessed when we worship God. I do not doubt that for a moment. But you do not come to church to be blessed. Did that shock you? You do not come to church to be entertained. Why do you come? You come to worship. You come not to get, but to give. You come to give God His honor, His glory, and His due. Whether you get anything out of the service or not is really immaterial. You come to give God His worship, His honor, and His glory.

David said over and over in Psalm 116, "I will pay my vows now in the presence of all thy people." What is he saying? I owe God something, and I will get together with all of God's people and pay God what I owe Him. I will give Him the honor and the glory due unto His name.

Stephen Charnock said, "To pretend homage to God and intend only the advantage of myself, that is, I come to be blessed. I come to have a good time. To pretend homage to God and intend only honor to myself is rather to mock God than to worship Him. When we believe that we ought to be satisfied rather than God glorified, we set God below ourselves and imagine that he should submit his own honor to our advantage. We make ourselves more glorious than God as though we were not made for him, but that he was made for us. A spiritual worshiper performs not worship for some hopes of carnal advantage. He uses ordinances to bring God and his soul together to be more fitted to honor God in the world and in his particular calling."

We do not come to get; we come to give. It is true, and blessed be His holy name, that in giving, we always get. You cannot honor God

the way God deserves to be honored without being blessed by God for doing so. But you do not come to get the blessing. You come to give God the worship and the honor due unto His holy name.

If we understood that, we would never take the attitude, "It's Sunday morning. I've got to get up and go to church or everybody's going to think I'm backslidden." No. If you understood this, you would say, "Blessed be God. It's the Lord's Day. I get to give God public worship and public honor and public glory, because He deserves it. He's the only one true and living God, and beside Him, there's none other." Let's pray.

Father, once again, we bow to Thee and come to Thee in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. We come in the Holy Spirit, asking You to teach and help us. O God, make us true worshipers. May we learn to worship God with the entirety of our being—with our minds engaged, our affections warmed, and our wills wrapped up in Thee—blessing the Lord with all that is within us. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. May we honor and worship Thee in spirit and in truth. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Acceptable Worship

Part Five

Introduction and Review

John chapter 4, beginning with verse 19:

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ. When he is come, he will teach us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

We are gathered together in what we normally refer to as a worship service. Since the true worship of God is demanded and commanded in the Bible, and since it is our duty and obligation to worship the one true and living God, none of us can be indifferent as to how we worship Him. We must worship Him acceptably.

In the first message, I dealt with our duty and obligation to worship God. In the second, I dealt with the proper object of worship: the one true and living God. He is not merely God in a general theistic sense; He has revealed Himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of believers. That one truly living God is also spirit. That is His essence.

If we worship God aright, we must worship Him not only as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of believers in the marvels of His grace, but also as He who is spirit. This has an implication for us: if we worship God as Scripture says, we must worship Him in spirit and in truth. In Philippians 3:3, the Apostle Paul says that we are the true Israel, who worship God in spirit, have no confidence in the flesh, and rejoice in Christ Jesus.

True worship is a direct fruit of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Worship is absolutely essential; it is not a non-essential item. Our Lord says in verse 23, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Why? "For the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Worship, then, is not a luxury; it is an essential goal of salvation.

We have looked at the proper object of worship, the one true and living God, and have begun looking at the proper sphere of worship. We must worship God in spirit. "Spirit and in truth" is the proper sphere of worship. If we worship God spiritually, we must first be spiritually alive. The unconverted and unsaved individual cannot render unto God the worship that He demands. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:1, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins." In order to worship God spiritually, we must be made spiritually alive.

Secondly, we must be spiritually assisted. Our Lord said in John 15:5, "Without me ye can do nothing." If worship is something, we cannot do it without Christ. Without Him, we can do absolutely

nothing. Thirdly, we must be spiritually active. We are not passive; we must be actively engaged in worship.

To explain this further, when I talk about worshiping God in our spirit, I mean worshiping God in the totality of our being. Our minds are occupied, our affections are engaged, and our wills are engaged. David said it like this in Psalm 103, verse 1: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” It is not just my voice that goes forth in praise and adoration to God; my entire being is behind that voice.

It is just like the Apostle Paul said in Romans 1, verse 9. He talked about how he served God in his spirit. It was Paul's body that was moving all around the Roman Empire, worshiping and serving God, but it was his spirit that was motivating and moving that body to worship, honor God, and obey Him. So we must worship God in our spirit. We understand, then, at least in some degree, what it means to worship God in spirit.

Worship in Truth: General Definition

But we must ask ourselves, what indeed does it mean to worship God in truth? First, let me give you an overview; then I want to expand upon that overview and give you some of the implications. What does it mean when our Lord says that they who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth? Generally, to worship in truth means that we worship with every passion and every disposition of our heart, and that the totality of our worship is guided and regulated by the Word of God. It means that everything that we are and everything that we do is brought in line with and in conformity with the Word of God.

The word truth is used in different ways in Scripture, and the context usually determines how that word is to be understood. If you look in verse 22, our Lord told the Samaritan woman, “Ye worship ye know not what.” He says, “We know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.” That is, He was of the tribe of Judah, the southern tribe. How could He say that salvation is of the Jews? Or how could He have said that salvation is of Israel? How could He make that statement? Let me show you why. Look in your Bibles to the book of

Romans, chapter 3, beginning with verse 1. Romans chapter 3, verse 1.

The Written Word as Truth

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” Where was the law of God kept? It was in Judah, where the tabernacle was, and later where the temple was. Thus, it was the Israelites who had the divine revelation of God.

Paul says, “For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” Then he identifies them: “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

What advantage, then, did Israel have over all the other nations? They had the truth. They had the Word of God. God did not give it to the Babylonians, to the Assyrians, or to the Egyptians. He gave it to the Israelites. Therefore, our Lord could say in John 17, in His high priestly prayer, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Very obviously, when our Lord says that we must worship in spirit and in truth, this has reference to the Word of God, which is truth. Our Lord says, “They that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

When we speak of spirit, we are touching what we know as the subjective and inward requirement of acceptable worship. For instance, when you come into this building, plop down in a chair, and open your mouth physically, you may sing, talk, or pray, but that does not really amount to a hill of beans unless the Spirit is involved. In other words, we must worship the Lord in the totality of our being: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” Worshiping God in spirit refers not only to the Holy Spirit of God, but also to our spirit, and that touches upon the subjective and inward aspect of worship. Unless we worship God with our spirit, our worship is unacceptable.

Our Lord then bounds that subjective and internal worship with an objective and external framework of truth, the Word of God. In other words, our emotions are not just something to run wild. We do not do whatever we think we want to do as we bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. No, we must worship God in spirit, but that worship is bounded on the other side with truth. We may have worship internally and subjectively in the spirit, but it is bounded and surrounded by the external, objective truth of the Word of God.

Thus, we have that which is intangible and that which is tangible, in one sense of the word. The intangible is that which is our spirit, which we cannot see and perceive. But then we have that tangible, which is the outward, external Word of God, which we can touch. When we worship God in truth, there are going to be two specific aspects of truth to consider.

The first one should be very obvious. When we worship in truth, we must worship in a context that gives due regard to the Word of God in general, because God's Word is truth. Secondly, we must worship also in a context in which we give peculiar regard to the Son of God in particular, because He is truth incarnate.

We worship God in regard to the truth written, and we worship God in relationship to the truth incarnate. We worship Him, first of all, in relationship to the totality of Scripture. Then, secondly, we worship Him in relationship to the finality and the fullness of the revelation which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Now, when the Apostle Paul said, "All scripture is God-breathed," what is he talking about? He is talking about the written Word of God, is he not? We know that the Bible is the God-breathed Word. It is the objective Word of God.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” That is the written Word.

In John 1:1–3 we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” What Word is being discussed in John 1:1–3? Christ. Then, in verse 14, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” “And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus Christ is the living Word. The Bible is the written Word.

In John 12:48, our Lord puts these together: “He that rejecteth me,” that is, the living Word, “and receiveth not my words,” that is, the written Word, “hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

You cannot take one attitude toward the Word of God and a different attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot say, “I do not believe the Bible, but I believe in Jesus Christ.” It does not work like that. Nor can you say, “I do not believe in Jesus Christ, but I believe the Bible.” The Bible is the written Word of God, and Jesus Christ is the living Word of God. They are together; they are one and the same in one sense of the word. You cannot have one without the other. If you despise the written Word of God, you also despise the living Word of God; if you despise the living Word of God, you reject and despise the written Word of God. Therefore, if we worship God in truth, we must first worship with due respect for the Word of God in general.

When I say that, I mean the whole, the totality of Scripture. The Bible refers to the Scriptures as the Word of Truth. You will find that in Colossians 1:5 and 2 Timothy 2:15: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” The Bible is the word of truth.

When you come into this building to worship God in spirit, that means that when you place your bodies in these chairs, your spirit must be actively engaged. Your mind must be actively engaged, and your will must be actively engaged.

But if you are thinking, what are you to be thinking about? You must be contemplating God—His attributes, His character, His truth, or some aspect of that truth. You do not come in and simply sit

down, waiting for something to happen or for something to tickle your innards. Drink Mountain Dew; that is what Mountain Dew is supposed to do—tickle your innards, if you remember that old commercial.

No. You come in and say, "I'm going to worship God in my spirit. I'm going to bless Him with the wholeness of my being. Therefore, I must be active, and my mind must be engaged." What must your mind be engaged in? The first answer is truth. You remember what the Apostle Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7: "Consider what I say."

"And the Lord give thee understanding in all things." God is not going to give us understanding without our considering. We must use the means and, at the same time, trust God to bless those means. When you come in, you must consider what God has revealed.

In worship, then, the mind is engaged in thinking about God. If we are thinking about God, what thoughts must we think about Him? Unless your thoughts are biblical, and unless they respect the totality of Scripture—the general revelation which God has given of Himself in Scripture—unless you are thinking about those attributes of God as they are revealed, your worship is defective and unacceptable. God is not what you imagine. God is as He has revealed Himself. Now, let me give you an illustration.

Many of you have read and studied the life of Martin Luther, and I have brought messages on the life of Martin Luther before. When Luther posted the ninety-five theses on the castle church door in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517, we say that was the beginning of the Reformation. But Luther had a real struggle before he was saved by the grace of God. You know why? Because everything taught back then was basically that God is holy—and that is true—an angry God, angry with our sin and wickedness, and a God of wrath—and He is. One of Luther's problems was simply this: Luther could not conceive how such a holy, righteous, just God could love a wicked sinner like himself.

Now, let me ask you a question. Is God holy and just? Yes. But God is also love. Do you realize Luther and many who were truly converted feared God? I mean, they feared God because they knew

His justice, righteousness, and holiness. What has happened today? Just showing you: that aspect of God's character has been so neglected, while “God is love” has been preached so much that the average sinner thinks, “If God is love, then God does not care what I do or do not do.”

He says, “And He'll never do me any harm. Therefore, I'll drink and curse and whoremonger around and spit in His face. He won't send me to hell because God is love.”

Now, I want you to understand something, folks. It is true that God is love. Let me show you. Look in John 3, verse 16. Here's a verse everyone in this room can quote. John 3, verse 16. The Bible says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Now, let me ask you, is that truth? Well, of course it's true. But look at verse 36 in the same exact chapter. John 3, verse 36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Now, which is true? John 3:16 or John 3:36? Well, both are true. You see what I'm saying? So when you come to God, you can't just sit here and say, "Well, I want to contemplate on the fact God is love, love, love," and then totally neglect God's holiness and God's justice. Nor can you come in here and say, "Well, I want to just consider God as just and holy" and totally neglect the fact that God is love and God is merciful and God is a forgiving God. No, we must consider God as He's revealed in the totality of Scripture.

I suppose one of the greatest defects in our lives is that we really don't know who God is. And we cannot probably discuss the attributes of God sensibly or scripturally. If I were to mention the knowledge of God, the immutability of God, the justice of God, the holiness of God, the power of God, the goodness of God, not just referring to His omniscience, omnipotence, His omnipresence. No, no, no. Any of these attributes—most of us never, ever meditate upon them.

Now, the point I'm trying to make is this. If we're going to worship God in spirit and in truth, our minds must be engaged as the truth is

revealed in Scripture. Therefore, we must study to know the Word of God. How about this? Scripture says, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." Well, if you're going to come in this building and be thankful to God and offer Him praise, to whom are you going to offer that praise? And may I ask, why should you offer Him that praise?

I've got news for you, folks. When we come to praise God, we don't just sit here and say, "Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord." Let me tell you something. You know, if I give my grandkids money, if I give them a gift, I don't want them to just come up to me and say, kiss me on the back of the head and say, "Thanks, Pop." No, I really prefer that they would hug my neck with a little excitement, you know, and maybe kiss my cheek and give me a good squeeze and say, "Pop, I really appreciate that. Thank you."

Most of us, when we thank God, thank Him with such dullness and such deadness. No, we ought to praise Him with all that is within us. That does not mean jumping around, shouting, or tapping our toes on the pews. That is not what I am talking about. It means that our spirit is actively engaged, that we are genuinely and heartily thankful, that our affections are set on Him, and that we are blessing the Giver, being more thankful to Him than for the gift. We come in here and say that God has saved us from our sins.

Have you ever contemplated and thought about sin? There is an old Puritan book, still in print, that you ought to get and read if you can. The name of it is The Plague of Plagues, by Ralph Venning. It is devoted to hamartiology, that is, the doctrine of sin. You are talking about somebody who can describe sin. You are talking about somebody who can make you feel smaller than an ant. If you do not know who you are, what you are, and what you were, you do not know how to be thankful for what God has delivered you from. So, if we are going to praise Him for His salvation, we must actually know what sin is, and we must know what redemption is.

Now, this has implications. Where the Word of God is neglected or perverted, worship is rendered unacceptable in direct proportion to that rejection, neglect, or perversion of the Word of God. How can I say that? Look at what the Bible says in Proverbs 28:9. There are many other passages, but this one is so clear and plain that it cannot be misunderstood: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the

law, even his prayer shall be abomination." God says, "You will not listen to my word. You will not obey my word. Even your prayer is an abomination." The word abomination literally means a stench in the nostrils. Therefore, to the degree that we neglect, reject, or pervert the Word of God, to that degree worship is unacceptable. Consider all the cults that deny the deity of Jesus Christ and yet profess to worship the one true and living God. Their worship is unacceptable.

Look at the liberals and those who deny the Word of God. Their worship is unacceptable. Look at Christians who are living in abysmal ignorance of the Word of God. Their worship is defective and unacceptable—not to the degree that the cults, liberals, and modernists are, but it is still unacceptable. You and I cannot live in willful ignorance of any facet of God's glory and character and then expect to render true worship unto Him—worship in truth. God has revealed Himself in the totality of His Word. The only God who exists is the God of Scripture, and He is as He has revealed Himself, not as people try to make Him in their minds or imaginations.

The Regulative Principle of Worship

If we understand what worship in truth means, it means that nothing must be introduced into our worship for which there is no biblical warrant. If we are worshiping God in truth, we must not only know how to think of Him in truth, but also how to approach Him in truth.

Two philosophies have been brought down through the Reformation to us today. The first was basically espoused by Luther and those closely associated with him: Whatever is not forbidden in the Bible in worship, we maintain. In other words, if it is not forbidden, we will maintain it. Zwingli and some others said, “No, that is not right. We maintain nothing in worship except that for which we have biblical warrant.” Who was correct? It would be Zwingli and those like him. When you say, “If it is not forbidden, we can do it,” do you know what the average church has become with that attitude? A three-ring circus.

They will have gags, gimmicks, and even circuses in the church building to draw people. One of my favorite stories—it is a true story—concerns a preacher down in Florida who had a baby elephant

brought into the main auditorium for all the children who came on their buses. Every child who came on the bus had his picture taken with the baby elephant. While it was there in front of the pulpit, the elephant did what elephants do. The stench was so bad that, when the preacher tried to preach over it, all the little children simply sat there laughing and giggling the whole time.

They not only had to clean the carpet; they had to replace it. Why is something like that going on in a church building? Because anything goes just so we can reach our goals.

If you understand the biblical principle, we do not allow anything in worship except that which God demands. God tells us how we are to approach Him. Look in your Bibles at Deuteronomy 12:32. This is repeated in Deuteronomy 4 and literally repeated in Revelation. God says, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it. Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

Isn't that simple? God says, "Whenever I command you, you observe to do it. But you do not add to it, and you do not take from it." Therefore, you and I do not take the attitude, "Well, we maintain what is not forbidden." No. We take the attitude that we throw out everything except that which we have biblical warrant to maintain. In that way, we are giving due regard to the truth.

The Role of Expository Preaching

Let me give you another observation before we go further. If worshipping God in truth refers to worshipping Him in the totality of the revelation He has given of Himself, one of the best ways to prepare yourself for and promote true worship is through regular, systematic, expository preaching and teaching of the truth. By the way, that applies to your personal study as well. You know what I do?

I read through the Old Testament. I read through the New Testament. When I finish, I go back and start all over again. I read all the genealogies and the hard passages, and I try to pronounce all the hard names. Trying to read it all over and over and over and over, pretty soon some of it begins to soak in.

Now, I have news for you, folks. Expository preaching is the hardest of all preaching, but it is the best, and it is where you learn most of the Word of God. You know what can happen? I can tell you how to have five hundred people in a building in a matter of months. You know how I can do that? By entertaining them. All I have to do is preach a short twenty- or thirty-minute message filled with jokes, humor, and entertainment, and have a good band or good music. That is all! People will flock to that. But start preaching and expounding the truth of God, explaining the Scripture, now listen, applying the Scripture, and expecting people to obey the Scripture, and suddenly they do not want any part of it. I believe that is why the Lord looked at His disciples and said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." If we are going to worship God in truth, we must have due regard for the totality of truth.

Worship in Truth: Peculiar Regard to Christ

Secondly today, listen carefully: if we are worshipping God in truth, we must worship Him in a context that gives peculiar regard to God's revelation in Christ. The word true is used in several different ways, and the context determines how it is used. Usually, true means true as opposed to false. Right? When our Lord said, "I am the true vine," what was He saying? All others are false. When He said, "I am the true bread," all others are false; when He said, "I am the true door," all others are false. There is true as opposed to false. But true is also used in another way. You say, "How's that?" Well, look in your Bibles, if you would, to John chapter 6, John chapter 6.

In John 6:27, our Lord tells His disciples, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." He commands them, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth." Now, go back to John chapter 4.

You remember the woman at the well. His disciples, by the way, had gone away to buy meat while He was witnessing to this woman. In John 4:31, the Bible says, "In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat." Watch. "But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of." They had brought Him physical

food. They said, "Master, eat something here." He answered that He had meat of which they knew nothing. Look in verse 34. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Now, what is the true, substantial meat for Christ?

It is the will of God. Now look in John 6:35. Once again, "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He also said in verse 27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

Now, let me ask you a question. How many of us can live very long without eating? Some can live longer than others; I understand that. But you know as well as I do, if we do not eat physically, we die. What does our Lord say? Our Lord is saying that physical food is a type, a shadow of reality. The real bread of life, the substance, the substantiality, is in Christ Himself. It is His life; it is His salvation. I want you to understand that there is a true reality as opposed to the shadow or type. Let me ask you to think about this: Was there true worship in the Old Testament?

The answer is yes, and the answer is no. There was true worship in the Old Testament, in that they worshipped according to the limited revelation God had given them. But the answer is no, because it was not the full and final revelation which we have now in Jesus Christ.

When Abel worshipped God in Genesis 4, did he worship Him in truth? Yes—a limited truth, but he worshipped Him in truth. When Abraham worshipped God, did Abraham worship Him in truth? The answer is yes, but not in the way that we worship Him in the New Testament. When they worshipped God in the tabernacle and later in the temple, did they worship Him in truth? The answer is yes, in light of the limited revelation they had. But all of those things in the tabernacle and temple were mere types, shadows, and emblems. It was not reality, the substance, or the fullness of truth.

Jesus Christ said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He is the truth. In John 4, notice verse 21: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain," that is, Gerizim, "nor yet at Jerusalem,

worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh," a future hour, "and now is," and yet there is a presence, "when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

What is Christ saying? The hour is coming, a future hour, when true worship is going to be in spirit and truth, and it now is. Why did He say that "now is"? Because He was there. At this point, He had not finished His work. But He said the finishing of this work and the worshiping of God in spirit and truth is directly related to Him. He was there then. Thus, an element of worshiping in truth was to be introduced not only at the coming of Christ, but also at the completion of His work.

Let me quote John 1:17 and explain it one more time. The Bible says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Here is my question: Was there no grace in the Old Testament? Of course there was. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and everyone who was ever saved in the Old Testament was saved by grace. Was there no truth in the Old Testament? Of course there was. Everything that God has revealed is truth, but it was not the fullness of grace nor the fullness of truth until Jesus Christ came, because Jesus Christ is the fullness of truth and the fullness of grace. So he says the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Grace and truth, in their full and final manifestation, came only in Jesus Christ.

What am I trying to show you? Everything else in the Old Testament, around the tabernacle and around the temple, was nothing more than types, emblems, and shadows. Was there worship—true worship—in the Old Testament? Yes. Was it worship in spirit and in truth? Yes, but it was a limited amount of truth because the fullness of God’s revelation had not been given.

Old Testament Worship as Shadow

We tend to think about that tabernacle and temple worship. The temple was undoubtedly magnificent. If you have ever seen pictures of the attire of the high priest—oh, my soul—especially the breastplate with its twelve stones, you recognize its beauty.

Beautiful. Then there was the miter with “Holiness to the Lord.” When you think about the beauty of the temple and the beauty of the high priest, and then think about all those physical animals that were sacrificed, every one of us loves to smell steak grilling. They had an altar, and they would cook the whole cow. There was also incense being burned.

Now, listen to me. Here is the problem: you could see the temple, smell the temple, taste the temple by eating the sacrifices, hear what was going on, and touch it. We tend to think that anything we can see, smell, hear, taste, and touch has to be real. But it was not real. It was not the reality. Look very quickly in your Bibles at Hebrews chapter 8. I pointed this out a little bit earlier, but let me go a little further. Notice, if you would please, verse 1, Hebrews 8, verse 1.

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum:" We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. The true tabernacle was pitched by the Lord. The first tabernacle was pitched by Moses, so that was not the true tabernacle.

"For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth," that is Christ, "he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." God specifically says that the tabernacle, and later the temple, were nothing more than shadows.

If you were in the shadow of a tree, are you in the tree? No. The shadow is an emblem; it is not real. Everything there was simply the shadow. Hebrews 9:24 says, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands," that is, the tabernacle or the temple, "which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Once again, the tabernacle and temple are referred to as a figure.

Hebrews 10:1 says, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." The ceremonial law had a shadow of good things to come. All of that in the Old Testament was nothing but a type and shadow. Yet we try to reverse it and say, "They really had reality back then." No, they did not have reality.

Jesus Christ said, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," not in Jerusalem, not in Gerizim, but in spirit and in truth. We will worship Him at the throne of His grace. Look in your Bibles to Hebrews 4:14.

New Covenant Worship: Spiritual Sacrifices

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Or our confession. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Note that we do not come to the type. We do not come to the shadow or to the emblem. We come boldly to the throne of grace—not in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense.

No Israelite in the Old Testament could run into the Holy of Holies whenever he wanted to. He could not run into the very presence of God. Even the high priest entered only once a year, and that was not without the shedding of blood. But now the Bible tells us that we may come boldly to the throne of grace.

The Bible tells us, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." We are kept by the power of God. Peter continues, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Then he says, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."

We have been redeemed with truth, with the true sacrifice, Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." What kind of sacrifices does God want now? Not a physical sacrifice, but a spiritual sacrifice. Because we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, by the true sacrifice, we are to give Him spiritual sacrifices—acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Hebrews says, "By him"—that is, by Jesus Christ—"therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." What kind of sacrifice do we give Him? We give Him the sacrifice of praise.

The Apostle Paul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Do you see? In this new covenant, since we have been redeemed, not with the blood of bulls and goats but with the blood of Christ, we now offer Him a spiritual sacrifice. We offer Him the fruit of our lips. We give Him worship in spirit and in truth. There are no vestments and no incense burners. The only thing we do is praise Him. We give Him the sacrifice of praise through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our Lord says, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

The Superiority of the New Covenant

Do you realize that the book of Hebrews is actually an expansion of John 4:19-26? In fact, the key word in Hebrews is “better.” In Hebrews 1:4, Christ is better than the angels; in Hebrews 6:9, we have better things; in Hebrews 7:19, a better hope; in Hebrews 7:22, a better testament; in Hebrews 8:6, a better covenant and a better promise; in Hebrews 9:23, a better sacrifice; in Hebrews 10:34, a better and enduring substance; in Hebrews 11:16, a better country; and in Hebrews 12:24, better things. Everything is better in the New Covenant than it was in the Old Covenant because the Old Covenant did not have the fulfillment of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We have the distinct and definite advantage over anyone who ever lived in the Old Covenant. Let me make a couple of applications.

Think about this. Look back in your Bibles at Hebrews chapter 8, verses 6 through 8. After speaking of the tabernacle and temple as types and shadows, verse 6 says: “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” He then speaks of the covenant, but note this: the second covenant is built upon a better ministry. It is a better covenant upon better promises.

To go back to any part of those Old Testament types and shadows is to dig up what God has buried and to change the light of the sun for the light of a candle. Why would anyone want to go back to a type, an emblem, or a shadow when he has the reality? Why would anyone want to light his house with a candle when he could open the windows and let in the light of the sun? Yet all around us are all the people and cults who want to return to the type, the shadow, and the emblem instead of rejoicing in and holding on to the reality.

Let me make a point, and I am going to show it to you from Scripture. Open your Bibles to Hebrews 13. This ought to shake every one of us. Those who want the types, shadows, and emblems really and truly have no right to Jesus Christ.

You may ask, “Pastor, how can you say that?” Look at Hebrews 13:10: “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” What is he saying? If you want the type, the emblem, or the shadow, you have no right to the reality.

Christ as the True Altar

Is there an altar in a local church? Is there such a thing as a physical altar in a local church? We often hear people say, “We want you to come down here to the altar.” Think about this for a moment. Was Moses out in the wilderness, with the people becoming upset, frustrated, and discouraged, when he decided, “I think what I will do is build a tabernacle and build an altar, and that way we will get everybody together”? Is that how the tabernacle came about? Is that how the altar came to be built?

No. We read it in Scripture earlier. The tabernacle and the altar were not Moses's idea; they originated with God. First, there had to be a divine revelation for that altar. Secondly, there was a divine pattern given to Moses: "See that thou make it according to the pattern given thee in the mount." Thirdly, it was built out of divine materials. Moses could not build that altar out of anything he wanted; he had to use the materials God ordained. Fourthly, when there was a physical altar, the only place where you could really worship and sacrifice to God was at that altar—nowhere else.

When somebody tells me there is an altar in a local church, I want to see the divine revelation for it, the divine pattern for it, and the divinely commanded materials for it. If you tell me it is there, then the only place you can worship God is at that physical altar.

What did the tabernacle have? A physical altar. What did the temple have? A physical altar. But why does the author of Hebrews say we have an altar? Because Jesus Christ is our altar. Because Christ is our altar, we may worship Him wherever and whenever. Grace may now be mediated to anyone, anywhere, at any time, because Jesus Christ is our altar.

We do not have a physical altar, but we have a real spiritual altar, Jesus Christ. We do not have a special physical priest, but we have a great priest, Jesus Christ. We do not have an unbloody sacrifice, but we have a real sacrifice, Jesus Christ. We do not have a physical tabernacle or a physical temple, but we have a real tabernacle, the real temple, which is Jesus Christ.

Everything in the Old Testament was types and shadows. Now we have a reality. Do you realize this has such practical applications?

I am for doing things right, and I want the best for our Lord. But have you ever noticed all the multimillion-dollar buildings being built for church buildings? Alice and I have passed some of the most magnificent buildings in our travels. I know some of those church buildings alone cost fifteen or twenty million dollars or more. Unhappily, most of them only use them one or two days a week, anyhow.

All that money goes into huge stained-glass windows, big expensive organs, and Steinway pianos. If you need a stained-glass

window, a Steinway piano, and a deep-throated organ to worship, something is wrong with you.

If God in His providence allowed us to have something similar without debt, that would be one thing. If we could maintain a ministry, that would be a horse of a different color. But if the reality of Jesus Christ, the reality of His being our great High Priest, His being seated at the right hand of God the Father and interceding for us, the reality of His blood atonement, His sacrificial sacrifice, His perfect, total forgiveness, His greatness, His majesty, and His deity do not stir your heart, no forty-thousand-dollar stained-glass window will ever move you.

Reality is not in buildings. Reality is in Christ. The early church worshipped wonderfully well without a special building. They met in homes because it was unlawful for them even to meet, but they met. The point is this.

Conclusion: Drawing Near Through Christ

If a seeking Father has found us and made us His child by His marvelous grace, all we need is Him. All true and acceptable worship is permeated with the consciousness of what Jesus Christ has done for us. Hebrews 10:19 says, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”

What enables us to draw near? It is the person and work of Jesus Christ. The only reason you and I are here today is because of Jesus Christ. The only reason we are saved, understand anything, or can worship is because of Jesus Christ.

When we come to worship, we do sit down in these chairs, but our spirits are to be stirred. Our minds are to be engaged, and our affections are to be elevated. We are to think upon God and the truth that He has revealed of Himself in His Word. We are to meditate upon and contemplate the living truth, Jesus Christ, who is the full and final revelation of God. He is reality. He said, “I am the true

bread”—not merely true as opposed to false, but true as opposed to shadow, emblem, type, and figure. He is reality.

Father, we thank Thee today for Jesus Christ and for the truth that You have revealed in Him. We are thankful for Your Word, the written Word. We pray, Father, that You would indeed enable us to bless Thee with all that is within us. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. May we worship Thee in spirit and in truth. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Acceptable Worship

Part Six

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when you shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. You worship you know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ. When he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

Review of the Series on Acceptable Worship

Let me remind you of what we have covered in this brief series. It is our duty and obligation to worship. But God is not indifferent to our worship. There are many passages in the Bible where he says, “I

hate, I despise, I will not have your offerings and your sacrifices." Worship is a matter of divine revelation; we must worship Him according to the Word of God. Real, acceptable worship is a direct fruit of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We then looked at the proper object of worship. We must worship the one true and living God—not merely God in a general theistic sense, but the God who has revealed himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Godhead, and as the Father of believers in the marvels of his grace.

Thirdly, we must worship God who is, in and of Himself, spirit. He says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Having covered the proper person, or proper object, of worship, we went to the proper sphere of worship: we must worship in spirit and in truth.

As we worship in spirit, it is not only that we worship in the Holy Spirit, but also that we worship with our spirits. David said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Our spirits are to be involved.

Then we looked at worship in truth. We must have due respect for the Word of God in general—that is, everything the Bible teaches about God—and particular respect for the Word of God incarnate, Jesus Christ, and how He has revealed Himself as God. Jesus Christ said, "I am the truth." Without Him, there is no truth. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." God has given His full and final revelation in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ evangelized the woman in John chapter 4, she was concerned with where we ought to worship, while our Lord was concerned more with how we should worship. True worship is not only in spirit, but also in truth.

The Place of Acceptable Worship: Public Worship is Necessary

As I have been preaching and teaching, I hope you have gotten the idea that it is proper and certainly acceptable to worship God anywhere, at any time. Lest, however, some begin to think that because we may worship God anywhere and at any time there is no

need for public worship, I want to show you a principle from Scripture: the place of acceptable worship.

Many ideas floating around this country, and around Christianity in particular, are foreign to what we would call biblical truth concerning acceptable worship. It is true that I can worship God while I am out in a boat fishing.

Why can I do that? Because God is spirit. And I may worship God there. I may worship God while I'm out in the field hunting. And I do that. Because God is spirit and I may worship Him there. I may worship God in my study. I may worship God in my bedroom. I may worship God at my work. But now let me ask you. Just simply because we may worship God wherever we are, does that mean that there is no specific place for public worship?

And the answer is absolutely no. And what has happened in this country is so many people have become uninterested, unconcerned, about what you and I would know as public worship. So what I want to do today is I want to establish from scriptures that there certainly is a need for public worship, and I want to show you from the Bible that wherever God peculiarly and particularly manifested himself, there he was always worshipped in a public and a special manner. I want to show you this principle from the Old Testament and also from the New Testament. So let's look at our Bibles, if you would please, to the book of Genesis chapter 12, and we'll look at several passages in the Old Testament before we ever get to the New Testament. Let me just point out what happened in Genesis chapter 12. Look, if you would please, at verses 7 and 8. Genesis 12, beginning there with verse 7.

Old Testament Examples of Public Worship at Places of Divine Manifestation

The Bible says, And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land. And there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east. And there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

Now what did God do? God has revealed himself in a particular and in a peculiar way to Abram. And so Abram then turned around and built an altar, that is, here was a public act, a public witness, a public testimony, a public manifestation of the fact that he is now worshipping God in an open and in a public manner. If you look in Genesis 13, beginning there with verse 3, And he went on his journeys from the south, even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first, and there Abram

Abram certainly worshipped God in his tent. He probably worshipped God as he walked in the fields. But what he always did was come back to that one place where God peculiarly and particularly manifested Himself, and there he worshipped God.

In Genesis 13, beginning with verse 14, we read: “Now the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place whence thou art northward and southward and eastward and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed be numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee.” Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.

What had God done? God once again revealed Himself to Abram. And Abram once again built a public testimony and gave public worship to the one true and the living God. This principle was continued throughout Scripture. In Genesis 21, Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. Abimelech asked, “What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?” Abraham answered, “For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.”

Wherefore he called that place Beersheba, because there they sware both of them. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol returned to the land of the Philistines. And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba and called there on the name

of the everlasting God. And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.

The word grove refers to a group of trees. It certainly is not the Asherah, nor the sex goddess of the Canaanites. Once again, God had blessed Abraham in a particular and public way, and once again Abraham built a public testimony for God's honor and glory.

In Genesis 22, Abraham is about to offer Isaac. Verse 6 says, “Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son.” Abraham had been commanded to offer his son Isaac, and this is pictorial of Christ carrying His own cross. Abraham took the fire in his hand and a knife, which is a picture of the wrath of God, and they went both of them together. Isaac spoke unto Abraham, his father, and said, “My father.” Abraham answered, “Here am I, my son.” Isaac saw the fire and the wood and said, “Behold, the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

Note verse 8: “And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” So they went both of them together. The Bible does not say that God will provide for Himself. It says, “God will provide Himself.” That is exactly what God did when He gave the Lord Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh.

In verse 9, they came to the place which God told Abraham, and Abraham built an altar there, laid the wood in order, bound Isaac his son, and laid him upon the altar upon the wood. Notice verse 10: Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. Then the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham.”

God told Abraham not to lay his hand upon the lad or do anything unto him, for now He knew that Abraham feared God, seeing that he had not withheld his son, his only son, from Him. Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. He took the ram and offered it for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.”

The angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time and declared, “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord,”

promising that in blessing He would bless him and in multiplying He would multiply his seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand upon the seashore. His seed would possess the gate of his enemies, and in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed, because he had obeyed God's voice.

What did Abraham do? He went ahead and offered that ram upon the altar. Note, if you would please, God once again revealed Himself there, and once again God was worshipped there.

Look in Genesis 28, verses 16 and 17. Here is Jacob, where God appeared to him in a dream. Jacob awaked out of his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.” He was afraid and said, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven.” Jacob rose early in the morning, took the stone that he had put for his pillows, set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel, though the name of the city was Luz at the first.

Note, here he sets up this pillar and pours oil upon it. What is he doing? God has revealed Himself to him, and now Jacob is worshipping God in this open, particular, and peculiar way. After Jacob came back from the land of Laban, where he had gone to get his wives, where did God tell him to go? “Go back to Bethel,” the very place where God first appeared unto him. That is exactly what he did.

In Genesis 35:1, God said unto Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make thee an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee, when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.” Once again, God revealed Himself there. God is to be publicly honored and publicly worshipped where He has revealed Himself.

This concept appears also in Joshua, chapter 5. The children of Israel were in the land of Canaan and about to attack Jericho. “And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?”

“And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.” This was nothing more than a Christophany—that is, a

pre-incarnate appearing of Christ in the Old Testament. “And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.”

New Testament Examples of Worship at Christ's Manifestation

When God revealed Himself in a peculiar and particular manner, He was always worshipped publicly. This concept is given not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament. In Luke, chapter 5, we find an incident involving Simon Peter. Jesus said, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.” Simon answered, “Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.” When they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake. They beckoned to their partners in the other ship, and both ships were filled so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” What did he do? He fell down and worshipped.

In John chapter 20, Jesus had appeared to His disciples, but Thomas was not there. I have always said that one reason I want to make sure I am in church is that, if the Lord does something, I want to be there when He does it. You start missing, and then you start missing the blessings of God.

When the other disciples told Thomas, “The Lord has appeared to us,” Thomas said, “Except I see the holes in His hand and put my finger there, unless I see the hole in His side and put my hand there, I will not believe.” John 20:26 says, “And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them.”

Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, “Peace be unto you.” Then said He to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands. Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.” Thomas answered and said unto Him, “My Lord and my God.” Did Thomas

ever reach for those holes? No. What did he do? He fell down and worshipped.

Without asking you to turn there, remember Revelation chapter 1. John was exiled on the Isle of Patmos. He turned and saw One covered with a golden girdle, whose hair was white as wool and whose face was as the brightness of the sun. John said, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead.” He worshipped.

The Tabernacle and Temple as Places of God's Peculiar Presence

Whenever and wherever there was a peculiar or particular manifestation of God, God was always there, worshipped publicly, formally, and openly. Why did Old Testament worship center around the tabernacle and later around the temple? Because of the Shekinah glory and the cloud that led the children of Israel by day as a pillar of cloud and by night as a pillar of fire. When the tabernacle was set up, the Shekinah glory descended upon it. There, in the Holy of Holies, God peculiarly and particularly manifested Himself, and there He was publicly and openly worshipped. Years later, when the temple was built in 1 Kings chapter 8, while the priests were ministering, the Shekinah glory came down with such great power and wonder that the priests had to withdraw themselves.

They could not even stand there. Why was there temple worship? Because God particularly and peculiarly manifested Himself there.

But this problem is so common that I must mention it again. Because God peculiarly and particularly manifested Himself in the tabernacle, and later in the temple, people began to think that this was where God was—that the tabernacle or temple contained God, or that God was there exclusively, totally, and completely. Therefore, God had to cry out against that.

The Church as the Temple of God Today

Go back in your Bibles to Isaiah 66. Notice verses 1 and 2: “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house that ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest?” Then He says, “For all those things hath mine

hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD. But to this man will I look, even him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word."

What does God say? The heaven is His throne, and the earth is His footstool. If the earth is God's footstool, all the materials on earth cannot make a house that would contain God. He fills the heavens and He fills the earth. Consequently, some Israelites said, "Since God has peculiarly and particularly manifested Himself in the temple, that is where God is."

No. It is true that this is a particular and peculiar manifestation of God. That is not where God is. God is everywhere at once in the totality of His being. It is true that God does not dwell in tabernacles and temples made by hands. There is no tabernacle or temple—there is no church building that can contain God. But just because God cannot be contained in one particular place does not mean that He does not peculiarly and particularly manifest Himself in a peculiar, particular place.

Where in the world does God peculiarly and particularly manifest Himself today? The answer is in His gathered people. Look in your Bibles, if you would please, to 1 Corinthians 3.

I want to point this out in light of what I am teaching and preaching today. Notice 1 Corinthians 3, where so many people have taken these verses out of context. In verse 16, the Apostle Paul writes, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

If you want to find that our bodies are the personal temple of God, you need to go to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. But when you get to 1 Corinthians 3, this has nothing to do with individual Christians. It has to do with the gathering together of the people of God, the gathering of the saints of God.

Notice what the Apostle Paul says in verse 9. He begins to make a distinction: "For we are labours together with God"; he is talking about the ministers or pastors. Then he says, "ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." He makes the distinction further

when he asks, “who then is Paul, and who is Apollos,” and speaks of ministers “by whom ye believed.”

Here is the distinction: You are God's husbandry; you are God's building. Then he tells how he has laid the foundation, and lets every other man, or every other minister, take heed how he builds thereupon. When you come down to verse 16, he maintains that distinction once again. He is still talking to the people of God: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

So what is he saying? He is saying that the assembly of the saints is the temple of God. May I remind you what the Greek word for temple is here? I told you in times past that there are two Greek words. The first one is hieron, which refers to the temple in general. But the second one is naos, which refers to the holy of holies. So he says, in this instance, you are the holy of holies. You are the naos of God. Where in the world does God today peculiarly and particularly manifest Himself? The answer is in the assembly of the saints. He says, “Ye are the temple of God.” That is why He said, “If any man destroy that temple, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” I have no right to try to destroy the assembly of the saints. And if you are gathered here and try to destroy the assembly of the saints, you have real problems yourself.

Can you imagine what is going to happen to these bureaucrats and these government officials who are trying to, quote unquote, close down the Church of Jesus Christ? I have news for you. There is an interesting study, without my getting into it, and I am certainly not in favor of Roman Catholicism by any stretch of the imagination. But a study was done when Henry VIII, of course, became king of England. He then began the Anglican Church, and he became the head of the Anglican Church.

He then stole a lot of the land that belonged to the Catholic monasteries and monks. He stole that land and gave it to a lot of his lords. A study was done on the descendants of the recipients of those lands. You talk about curse after curse after curse, and early death; it is unbelievable once you read the study. All he did was take from what you and I would basically call a pagan group because of all their

superstition, especially back when Henry VIII became king of England.

How much worse will it be when someone attacks the true church, the true believers, and tries to destroy the assembly of the saints? You follow what I am saying? Let me show you. Look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 18. Once again, here is a passage with which I am sure you are absolutely familiar. Notice, if you would please, verse 15. Here is a biblical way to resolve problems, and I am not going to get into that right now, but here is what God says.

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If you have a problem with a brother, you are to go to him privately—the very first thing. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained a brother.

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. That is another step. But if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church. That is another step. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. That is another step because that is church discipline.

Now watch what he says: Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if any two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. Why? For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.

Where does God peculiarly and particularly manifest Himself? The answer is in the assembly of the saints. That is why He said in 1 Peter 2 and verse 5 that you, as living stones, are built up into a holy priesthood.

Consider David. Everyone knows that King David was classified and called a man after God's own heart. Yet King Saul chased David over and over in the wilderness and tried to kill him. For months on end, David was pursued by Saul. Could David be a faithful saint and a faithful Israelite if he limited his devotion and worship to the prayer closet?

David's Longing for Public Worship

The answer is no, because God had particularly and peculiarly revealed Himself in the tabernacle, where God was also to be publicly worshipped. When Saul was chasing David, could David get to the tabernacle for public worship? No. If he went back there, Saul would kill him.

Psalm 84, written by David, is one of the most beautiful and touching Psalms in the whole Psaltery. David says, “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.” That is, how lovable, how gracious, and how beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”

Here David is being chased by Saul and cannot get to the tabernacle. Does David worship God in the wilderness? Yes. Does David worship God in his tent? Yes. Is that sufficient for David? No. “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” Then he says, “Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will still be praising thee.” David is saying, “God, I envy those little sparrows.” Why? Those little sparrows can go into the holiest of holies.

They can make their nests there. They can be there whenever they want to. I am cut off; I cannot be there. I think it is wonderful. I like to go into Lowe’s building supplies and look up: here are little sparrows flying everywhere. I think, Man, they have got it made. They have central heat and air, and food everywhere. That is what David was saying about the tabernacle. These sparrows and swallows could get in there anytime they wanted to, but he was cut off from it. He could not get there.

He said, “My heart and my flesh cry out.” I long to be where God is worshipped publicly. I long to be with God’s people where they are worshipping Him openly. Can I worship God in my closet? Yes. Can I worship God while I am hunting and fishing? Yes. But does that take the place of public worship? The answer is no. No true Israelite in

the Old Testament could ever be satisfied with mere private worship. Likewise, no true Israelite, no true Christian in this day and time, can be satisfied with mere private worship. We long to be with the people of God.

Alice and I laugh and talk about when we come in here on Sunday morning. There are times I almost have to slap this pulpit to get your attention. Why? You are talking, fellowshipping, and seeing your friends and brethren whom you have not seen all week. Is it not amazing how natural it is when we get together to fellowship with one another? And when we get together, how natural it is for our minds to go to the things of God.

Applications: Guarding Unity and Hearts in Worship

You cannot be indifferent, as a child of God, to the public worship of God. I find it absolutely amazing that some people have the attitude, "Well, if I go, I go. If I do not, I do not." I cannot comprehend that. The only thing I can say is that someone is probably not genuinely converted. We who are the people of God will not only worship God privately; we want to worship Him publicly as well. We want to be with the assembly of the saints. If we understand 1 Corinthians 3, especially verses 16 and 17, it means that as God's people, we are going to make sure that we do not do anything to hinder or eclipse the worship of God.

You ought never to come to church with what we would call bad attitudes, evil hearts, or wicked dispositions. Why? It takes just one individual to ruin a worship service.

I was preaching in one church, and I will not mention the state. After the service one night, I asked the pastor, "Who was that elderly man on the right side of the church? And who was that elderly woman on the left-hand side of the church?" They sat in the same pew up front, but on opposite sides.

He asked why I wanted to know. I said, "Because you have real problems in this church, and you have real problems with those two people. I do not even know who they are, but I sensed some horrible attitudes and dispositions. I could tell by looking at them that something was wrong in their lives."

He said, “That is a brother and sister. They fell out over a family inheritance and have not spoken to each other in ten years. Yet they still come to this church. One sits on one side and one on the other; they will not even look at each other.” I said, “You have not dealt with it, and you have not disciplined them. That is just as wicked and wrong on your part as it is on theirs.” I was a stranger there, yet I picked up on it in one sermon.

The point is this: The Bible says of the early church that they were with one accord. In Romans 15, we are to have one mouth and one mind, that we may glorify our God. We had better endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We do not make the unity, but we must make dead sure that we keep it. Our envies, jealousies, and hard feelings must go if we are going to worship God acceptably.

Thirdly, you and I are to be jealous to guard our own hearts. I cannot keep Robert’s heart or Harry’s heart, but I am responsible to keep my heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence.” Why?

Preparation for Acceptable Worship

For out of it are the issues of life. I am responsible before God that, when I come, I come with a holy heart. If I come with known sin in my heart, is that going to be acceptable before God? No. I am not only hindering my worship; I am also hindering other people's worship. God tells us that if we are going to worship Him acceptably, we must worship Him in the place where He peculiarly and particularly manifests Himself. When we do that, we must give due attention to the fact that we must do everything to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as the Word of God says.

Now, it is true that our Lord said in John 15:3, “Without me ye can do nothing.” I have been in churches where people talked to me about their pastor, and I am sure people have probably said the same thing about me. They have come to me and said, “Pastor, if you don't mind, could you talk to our pastor? We are just not really getting anything out of his sermons.” I said, “I don't mind talking to him, but let me ask you a question. Have you ever considered that it might not be your pastor?”

Now listen carefully. I do not care how much I have studied, how much I have prepared, how good the sermon is, or whether it is the best sermon in the world, with the best oratory and the best illustration. Unless your heart is prepared, you will never receive one benefit from the message. You are responsible before God to prepare your heart.

The Bible says in Proverbs 16, “The preparation of the heart in man are from the Lord.” It is true that God is sovereign and must prepare our hearts. But look at Hosea, chapter 10, verse 12. Proverbs 16:1 is true: if our hearts are ever prepared, God must prepare them. But look what He says in Hosea 10:12.

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord till He come and reign righteousness upon you.” The ability to prepare our hearts belongs to God; the responsibility to prepare our hearts belongs to us. We must seek Him to prepare our hearts. God says that we are to sow to ourselves in righteousness, that we may reap in mercy. We must break up our fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and reign righteousness upon us.

Many times we come to church with our hearts unprepared. There is not a man in this church building who, this spring, would go outside, take his garden seed, throw it on top of the ground, and walk away. You know why? Because if you want to garden, your ground must be prepared. You break up that fallow, hard ground and soften it so that it will be receptive to the seed, the fertilizer, and the water.

That is exactly what God is saying. You are responsible to prepare your heart to hear the Word.

You could call your preparation two-phased. There is indirect preparation and specific preparation. Indirect preparation refers to constant, continual, or daily preparation. Specific preparation is temporary and intense preparation. Consider a gymnast. What does a gymnast do to stay in shape? The gymnast exercises constantly and stretches regularly. But if a gymnastic tournament is coming, a month or so before that tournament the gymnast increases the exercise, stretching, and training to prepare for it.

The same is true in the Christian life. We have constant, continual preparation: we keep our hearts, pray, study the Scripture, do what is required of us daily, and use the private means of grace. Then, as the Lord's Day nears, there are other things we can do specifically and directly.

The old Puritans used to call this Sabbath preparation. On the night or day before the Lord's Day, they would begin to prepare their lives for worship on the Lord's Day.

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 15 (KJV)

> Psalm 15 is a wonderful psalm. David begins by asking this question: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" He answers: "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart, he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor, in whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord, he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not, he that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent, he that doeth these things shall never be moved." You could say that Psalm 15 is what we would call constant and continual preparation. We ought constantly and continually to be walking uprightly, working righteousness, speaking the truth, not backbiting, and doing that kind of thing.

But how about when you come to a passage like 1 John 1:9, which says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"?

If I were to ask how many of you sinned this past week, every hand would be raised. But if I asked how many confessed, acknowledged, and repented of those sins, would every hand be raised? David said in Psalm 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." If God will not hear our prayer when we regard iniquity in our hearts, how dare we come to publicly worship God and give Him the honor and glory due His name while knowing we have specific sins contrary to God and His Word? How dare we flaunt those sins in His face, unconfessed and unrepented of?

There are sins you and I usually do not think anything about, but they are sins nonetheless. I can assure you there are husbands and wives who have their spats. They get angry with each other and say things they ought not to say. Do you know what 1 Peter 3:7 says? "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them, that is, the wives, according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." Do you realize that if a husband and wife are not right with each other, they are not right with God? How can you give God public worship if you are still fighting and angry with each other?

I am not saying you have to commit adultery, steal, kill, or get drunk to have something to confess. How many of us have bad attitudes? If we are going to bring God acceptable worship, we must come with a clean heart. The only way our hearts can be cleansed is by the blood of Jesus Christ.

We ought to acknowledge our sins, ask for repentance, and ask for grace and mercy. As part of this preparation, we need to determine that we are going to be our best on the Lord's Day morning.

Do you remember when the ark was returned to Jerusalem? The Bible says that David danced before the Lord. What does the rest of that verse say? With all his might. David danced before the Lord with all his might. Everything that was in him, he was jumping up and down and praising the Lord that the ark had been brought back.

How in the world can you be your best on the Lord's Day morning and give God worship with all your might if you have been up to three o'clock in the morning watching the late, late, late movie? You cannot.

We need to make preparations so we can be mentally alert as well as spiritually and physically alert. I realize there are times when that cannot always be. If you have a sick child and have to stay up to two o'clock in the morning, God understands that. If you are ministering to someone, God understands that. Alice can tell you that there have been innumerable times in my ministry when I planned and prepared, and all of a sudden there was a death or something else. I would look at Alice and say, "What in the world am I going to do? I

have to go here. I have to minister to this person." Then we would always say, "The Lord will work it out," and He always does.

There are things that you and I cannot control. In those instances, we understand, and certainly God is understandable. But when we deliberately lie out with no regard for the proper worship of God, no wonder we are so unblessed, empty, dead, dry, dull, and barren. We have not given God that which He deserves.

We ought to give Him the absolute best. Do you remember all those animal sacrifices? They had to be perfect, without blemish. Why? Because He deserves the best. We must not give Him half-hearted worship. He refuses it. He rejects it. We must worship Him in spirit and truth, and worship Him with the totality of our being.

The Father Seeks True Worshipers

Why are you even here today, listening to this Word and offering worship to the One True and Living God? Our Lord says in John 4:23, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Why? For the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

I am still absolutely, totally amazed at the Father's grace in my life. The only reason we are here is because God sought us. Why did He single us out? Who are we? What are we? But sinners.

I remember, as a boy riding along one day on a motorcycle, a thought coming into my mind: What if you died right now? Where would you go? I can take you to the very spot. Why would those thoughts enter into my mind? It is true that I was raised in church, but I never heard any gospel preaching and teaching while I was in church. Yet that thought came into my mind.

The answer I gave was, "Well, I'll make it into heaven somehow. I've made it all my life, and everything else, I'll make it in somehow." Which is utter blasphemy. I have often thought, how stupid, how ignorant, how lost, how ungodly. I was a religious hypocrite and Pharisee. And yet God, in His mercy and grace, came to me and saved me.

I wasn't looking for Him. He found me. All of us who have been saved by the grace of God can say with the Apostle Paul, “I am what I am only by the grace of God.” Isn't it wonderful? We have a seeking Father who seeks His own, brings them to Himself, and makes them true worshipers.

Father, we are so thankful today for the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that You would indeed enable us to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Teach us to prepare our hearts, that we may worship Thee acceptably in reverence and godly fear. Teach us to deal honestly and openly with our sins. Teach us to prepare our bodies, that we may worship Thee with all of our minds—be mentally awake, physically awake, spiritually alert—that we may concentrate on Thy Word and praise Thee for all of Your mighty works and blessings to us. Help us to live for Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

Source Notes

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