



Why Worship Matters

CHAPTER 4: *THE POWER AND PILLARS OF WORSHIP*

Class #4 Review: The Purpose

- ▶ The “Regulative Principle” scripturally guides the worship practices that we utilize for corporate worship.
- ▶ The elements of worship we incorporate today are based upon O.T. and N.T. principles that God himself established so that his people could gather and properly meet him regularly.
- ▶ The Elders of the church are responsible to properly order each service. They follow in the footsteps of the Apostles who established the basic practices as the early church expanded.
- ▶ All elements of worship are to be conducted to the glory of God alone and to edify the congregants. No *strange fire*. Due care in worship results in blessings and spiritual growth.
- ▶ Our understanding and affection for God increases with time.

The Power and Pillars of Worship

- ▶ We will deal with the ways in which the Holy Spirit *motivates* and *moves* believers when we worship.
- ▶ How are we to worship a God who we cannot physically see with our biological eyes?
- ▶ 2 Cor 5:7 says: **for we walk by faith, not by sight.**
- ▶ When we read or hear God's word, he illumines our minds with application, and we respond accordingly with praise.
- ▶ (Right doctrine > Right worship).

The Power of Worship

▶ John 20:29

*Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those **who have not seen** and yet **have believed**."*

▶ 2 Corinthians 4:18 (our afflictions prepare us for future glory)

*as we **look** not to the things that are seen **but to the things that are unseen**. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

▶ God tells us that there is reality beyond the visible. His infinite power and promises transcend his natural creation.

▶ To **walk** (and thus worship) **by faith** requires that we attune our hearts and minds to the prompting of the Holy Spirit as he reveals and applies the truth of His Word in our lives.

The Power of Worship

- ▶ God's word penetrates our minds and hearts to accomplish his will. We must *spiritually listen!*
- ▶ John 10:27: "My sheep *listen* to my voice; I know them, and they follow me"
- ▶ John 16:13: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will *guide you into all the truth*, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he *hears he will speak*, and he will *declare to you* the things that are to come.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit *motivates* us to live according to what God reveals in the Bible, rather than trusting in our own understanding. We must *internalize* the Bible and apply scriptural principles to all of life rather than seeking *secret* knowledge.
- ▶ Proverbs 3:5–6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, *and do not lean on your own understanding*. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Christ Enables Faith and Right Worship

- ▶ **Acts 1:1-2** *In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had **given commands through the Holy Spirit** to the apostles whom he had chosen.*
- ▶ The Spirit began to apply what they had witnessed while living with Jesus for three years. The Spirit revealed his word.
- ▶ The Apostles wrote down these eye-witness accounts and teachings under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for our learning and edification.
- ▶ Today, the Spirit “**brings to mind**” what we read in his penetrating word. *This type of application and recall becomes the standard for how to live in holy obedience.*

A Spiritual House

- ▶ One of the most important covenantal promises from God was the plan to send the Holy Spirit into the world after Christ ascended. We see the **full imparting** at Pentecost for global ministry.
- ▶ With the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, we observe a **unique gifting** and **enabling** by God for personal ministry.
- ▶ Today, believers serve to build God's Kingdom because we too are uniquely **equipped** and **enabled** to do so by the Holy Spirit. This is to fulfill the *Great Commission*.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

- ▶ **John 16: 7-15** Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the **Helper** will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will **convict** the world **concerning sin and righteousness and judgment**: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.
- ▶ ¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the **Spirit of truth** comes, he will **guide** you into all the **truth**, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will **speak**, and he will **declare to you the things that are to come**. ¹⁴ He will **glorify me**, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will **take what is mine and declare it to you**.

The Role of the Holy Spirit for Ministry

▶ We see one other role in Acts 1:8

*But you will **receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

- ▶ The Holy Spirit is the Agent that gives *spiritual power and scriptural wisdom* to each believer to build God's Kingdom.
- ▶ Believers are equipped and enabled to do the work of ministry to build Christ's kingdom through sharing and living out the Gospel on a global scale. The Spirit saves.

Building a Spiritual House

- ▶ God no longer “tabernacles” in a single place as in the O.T.
- ▶ The Spirit is given to, and indwells, each believer to constantly *conform us to Christ*.
- ▶ Christ and the Father *initiate, regenerate, justify, sanctify, preserve* and ultimately *will glorify us* through the transformative work of the Holy Spirit by continually *applying* God’s word to our minds and hearts. Thus, we learn to *work out his will*.
- ▶ Christ will build his church, and each believer becomes part of that church as “living stones.” We are not solitary citizens of the Kingdom. We are placed in holy union with Christ and one another as members of his body.

Building a Spiritual Body

- ▶ **Eph 2:19-22:** *So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,* ²⁰ *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,* ²¹ *in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.* ²² *In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*
- ▶ So, we see that the work of the Holy Spirit is to build a corporate body of believers. He joins them together based on the foundation of God's word.
- ▶ Coordination of the building process is effected by the Holy Spirit to bring *unity* to the *church triumphant*.

Men at Work, The Word at Work

- ▶ The Apostles first set the order of worship for the early church.
- ▶ After they died, their successors (the Elders) became responsible for ordering church worship. If done properly, blessings of *peace, unity, and spiritual growth* result.
- ▶ The word of God is powerful and transformative in conjunction with its purposeful application by the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is **living and active**, sharper than any two-edged sword, **piercing** to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and **discerning** the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

The Word at Work

- ▶ **Rom 1:16** *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the **power of God** for salvation to everyone **who believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*
- ▶ **2 Tim 3:16-17** *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for **teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, **equipped** for every good work.*
- ▶ Here we see that God's word impacts our *thoughts, attitudes, desires, will, and actions* by reshaping them to **conform** to the commands and will of God
- ▶ We must ask the Spirit to improve our *understanding* of God's word.

Soaked in the Word

- ▶ Every worship service should be *oriented by* and *saturated with* the Scriptures.
- ▶ Ligon Duncan: We are to “read the Bible, preach the Bible, pray the Bible, sing the Bible, and see the Bible.”
- ▶ As we worship together weekly, the Word comes to us in many ways and styles, but it should permeate our prayers, songs, calls to worship, assurance of pardon, and closing benediction.

The Pillars of Worship

- ▶ The Pillars of Worship-The Foundational Elements (Activities) of Worship.
- ▶ What are the scripturally authorized practices for worship?
- ▶ WCF Chapter 21 instructs us regarding the proper elements of Reformed worship. Scriptures for these are presented therein.
- ▶ Sections 2, 3, and 5 address the proper elements.
- ▶ These elements come in several forms or categories.

The Elements of Worship

- ▶ > **Prayer** (Offered in Christ as Mediator and in His name)
- ▶ > **Reading and hearing of the scriptures** (The preached word received with proper humility and Spirit-led understanding)
- ▶ > **Singing** (of psalms, hymns, or other suitable songs with grace in the heart)
- ▶ > **Sacraments** (Duly administered and worthily received)
- ▶ > **Religious oaths/vows, days of fasting, various religious or holiday celebrations** – all to be used for holy purposes. Ex. Christmas, Easter, Weddings, Funerals, Anniversaries, God's Blessings, Missional Endeavors.

The Elements of Worship

- ▶ > Most churches in the Reformed tradition add the **giving of tithes and offerings** to the core of elements.
- ▶ > We often see scripturally based **corporate readings** such as **creeds, scriptural responsive readings, or recitations from various catechisms** employed during worship services. These are simply different methods of delivering the scriptures in support of the preached word.
- ▶ > Finally, a **scriptural benediction** of *blessing and sending* is almost always delivered by the pastor to end of each service. (IMPORTANT to receive it)

The Elements of Worship

- ▶ Not all elements are required in every service. Depending on the nature of the service, some may not be appropriate.
- ▶ Some elements such as the sacraments must be administered with regularity, but not necessarily weekly.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit uses these building blocks of worship to bring the body of Christ together each week in fervent celebration of Christ.
- ▶ We *hear* and *comprehend* God's Word through these elements. We are to make *diligent use* of corporate worship for our good and his glory.

The *Circumstances* for Worship

- ▶ By “circumstances,” we mean the **logistical matters** that orient the services mechanistically.
- ▶ They may differ from church to church depending upon the *purpose, goals, and context* of the service.
- ▶ **Examples:** Setting of the service, size and maturity level of the body, time of year, specific purposes and goals.
- ▶ **Additional *circumstances*:** Number of songs, length of the sermon, inclusion of responsive readings, number and types of prayers, frequency of the Lord’s supper, etc.- each impacting the *sequence or order* of the service.
- ▶ These are matters not specifically regulated by the scriptures but require the Elders to exercise Godly wisdom.

Summary

- ▶ When the *elements* of worship and the *circumstances* are properly organized by the Elders, the corporate worship service will be successful in conducting the people into the presence of God.
- ▶ We must be scripturally wise and take all due care to order our worship time in ways that bring glory to God and cause each believer to see, savor, and serve our Lord in ways that please him.

Next Week: *The Pattern of Worship-Chapter 5*