



Why Worship Matters

CHAPTER 5: *THE PATTERN OF WORSHIP*

Review: The Power and Pillars of Worship

- ▶ 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 God's word to our lives. The scriptures penetrate our minds and hearts to accomplish his will. We must **internalize** his word and then *spiritually* **listen and discern**.
- ▶ As we “walk” by the Spirit, he “brings to mind” what we read in his penetrating word. *This type of application and recall becomes the standard for how to live.*
- ▶ Both O.T. and N.T. worship had **structure** and **order** based on God's instructions. Some *elements* such as animal sacrifices have been replaced, but the foundational **practices** have remained until today.
- ▶ The key elements of worship are found in the WCF Chapt. 21. Some elements may not be used every week depending upon the nature and circumstances of the worship service. Elders oversee the order.

The Pattern of Worship

- ▶ We will now turn our attention to the to the *sequence* or pattern of the worship service.
- ▶ Much time is spent each week in seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit as the elements of the worship service are planned and put into a sequential order.
- ▶ Each element is to be *saturated* by God's Word.
- ▶ **Structure** does not limit the activity of the Holy Spirit and further facilitates the *spiritual dialogue* between the parishioners and God during worship.

Does *structure* necessarily mean less spiritual or less Spirit-driven worship?

- ▶ **NO!** Reformed worship means we expect the Holy Spirit to be *present* and *active* in the hearts and minds of each believer while they are worshipping.
- ▶ Structured worship in no way inhibits or limits the sovereign work of our Triune God. On the contrary, **Ps 22:3** says that God “*inhabits* the praises of his people.”
- ▶ God has woven some important patterns of worship into the created order and into the way that the church is to approach him. We come to him via the **leading of the Spirit** while seeking *unity* and *conformity* to his word and will.

Structure or Patterns Orienting Man's Worship are Nothing New

- ▶ Not only did God create everything, but he went a step further and set apart (sanctified) the seventh day as **holy unto himself**. The purpose behind this Sabbath day was and remains to “rest from all of our common labors,” so that we may gather in heartfelt worship of HIM...weekly.
- ▶ We are reminded that God called the Israelites out of Egypt specifically to “**worship and serve him**.” In **Leviticus 23:3**, we find a clear reinforcement of the fourth commandment. “The day is to be **holy**.”

Structure in the New Testament

- ▶ Jesus frequently worshipped in local synagogues, often reading from God's word and then preaching there.
- ▶ Jesus himself observed the Sabbath and further instituted the covenantal sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism.
- ▶ Likewise, the Apostles regularly *gathered and preached* on the Lord's Day. Over time, these *undershepherds* incorporated the *key patterns and elements* of worship into these regular church gatherings.
- ▶ The DAY of worship changed to the first day of the week in *post-ascension* times but the general pattern and major elements for worship have largely remained constant.

Examples of O.T. Patterned Worship

- ▶ Sabbath Worship—Weekly gatherings
- ▶ Holy Days, Feasts, (and Fasts)->remembrance and celebration
- ▶ These designated days both reminded the people of God's blessings and the *need for atonement* for personal sin. They were to offer praise for God's pardon and provision.
- ▶ Leviticus details how the people were to gather and what to bring as part of their worship. Their offerings were designed by God to point them to the *once-for-all sacrifice of Christ*.
- ▶ Today we do not offer animal sacrifices, but we do follow the **pattern** of regularly gathering to offer *sacrifices of praise* and to *give our tithes and offerings* in gratitude for God's blessings.

The Gospel in O.T. Patterns of Worship

- ▶ 1. Resting from our works and gathering in the presence of God while confessing sin and seeking pardon.
- ▶ 2. The need to make Atonement for our sins. (Day of Atonement)
- ▶ 3. Transference of sin to the scapegoat (ultimately Christ) resulting in **justification** and spiritual transformation (**sanctification**) of the person.
- ▶ 4. Rest and peace with God because Christ made full satisfaction *for us*.
(Includes forgiveness of confessed sins)
- ▶ 5. Corporate praise and worship before him (often with celebratory eating) to acknowledge his manifold blessings. (Sacraments)

Structured Services in the N.T.

- ▶ Worship in the N.T. church had similarities to O.T. Jewish worship patterns. However, it pointed to Jesus without the need for animal sacrifices. (Jesus was the ultimate, once-for-all sacrifice)
- ▶ As the Gospel spread, new structures and elements became necessary to reach the **Gentiles** who knew virtually nothing about Jewish worship practices. Further, such people needed extra instruction and regulation in worship practices given the prevalence of pagan religions and their sinful cultic practices.
- ▶ These modified *patterns* and *elements* focused attention on the Gospel story of Christ. They pointed to the need for forgiveness of sin, the means for such forgiveness, and then showed their need to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.
- ▶ *Heartfelt, proper worship was the response and remains so today.*

Gospel Shaped Worship—Reformed Elements

- ▶ Based upon the O.T. and N.T. worship foundations, we will now observe the *elements* proposed under the Regulative Principle.
- ▶ We will see that God weaves these scriptural elements together to properly bring us into his holy presence.
- ▶ We should note the “**God speaks : We respond**” recurring *pattern* that develops during corporate worship. In this way, we *both commune with and respond to God* during each worship service.
- ▶ *The specific **order** of these elements may vary to some degree.*

God Speaks-*The Call to Worship*

- ▶ Through the reading aloud of his word, God *calls* us to focus upon him, to draw near, and to joyfully celebrate his majesty and infinite *worth-ship*.
- ▶ Often, we are called with an appropriate Psalm or a Scripture that relates to the message to be preached.
- ▶ The Good Shepherd is calling his flock unto himself no matter how far they have strayed or how sin stained they are.
- ▶ God graciously bids us to **APPROACH** by having his word read aloud to start the service.

Gods People Respond-*Prayer of Invocation and Adoration*



- ▶ The church responds by asking God's help to properly worship.
- ▶ This prayer may also offer praise and further ask the Holy Spirit to sovereignly move by opening the hearts and minds of each person to hear God's Gospel Truth.
- ▶ A song of adoration for God may follow.

God Speaks-*Reading of the Law + Invitation to Confess Sins*

- ▶ Q. How did Isaiah respond to coming into the Lord's heavenly presence?. **A.** He confessed his sin as should we.
- ▶ Reading the ten commandments or an appropriate catechism passage may serve to motivate confession of personal sin.
- ▶ Additional scriptures such as 1Jn 1:9 might be read to give assurance that pardon is promised following the offering of *humble and contrite* confessions.
- ▶

The People Respond-*Corporate Confession of Sin*



- ▶ In response to God's invitation, the congregation joins together in a time of corporate confession and prayer.
- ▶ This moment allows worshipers to humbly acknowledge their sins before the Lord, seeking His mercy and forgiveness as a unified body.
- ▶ This element may be more or less formal depending upon the church and context. Prayerful, contrite confession should not be neglected.

God Speaks—Assurance of Pardon

- ▶ After the people collectively confess their sins, God graciously responds with a word of forgiveness, drawn from Scripture. Ex: 1 Jn 1:9
- ▶ This declaration assures the congregation of God's mercy and the promise of cleansing through Christ, filling the worshipers with hope and gratitude.
- ▶ *God graciously lifts us out of the mire and misery of our sins.*

The People Respond-*Prayers of Intercession*

- ▶ Assured of our status as forgiven and beloved children of God, we may now approach the Father with additional prayers and petitions.
- ▶ The congregation lifts up the sick, the needy, the spiritually oppressed, those needing comfort and consolation, and others in need per the scriptures.
- ▶ As we intercede with the aid of the Holy Spirit, so too Christ (our Mediator) also lifts our prayers up to the Father.
- ▶ Like all prayers, they are to be offered in the ***name*** of Jesus.

God Speaks-Reading and Preaching God's Word

- ▶ God's word constitutes the *anchoring* element of the service.
- ▶ Without the delivery of God's word, there would be no meeting with him. Preaching may be supplemented during the service by related forms of scriptural readings before the congregation e.g. *Responsive Readings, Catechisms, Creeds, etc.*
- ▶ This follows Paul's solemn charge to Timothy found in **1Tim 4:13** *Until I come, devote yourself to the **public reading** of Scripture, to **exhortation**, to **teaching**.*
- ▶ Thus, we learn God's will for our lives and worship.

God Speaks- Reading and Preaching God's Word

- ▶ The central character of the preached word is further highlighted in: **1Cor 15:3-4**

*For I **delivered** to you as of **first importance** what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,*

- ▶ Among Reformed Churches, “this element holds a priority position in virtually every service because *Jesus is actually addressing the body through the Pastor.*” He is the messenger of Christ's truth.
- ▶ We hear the very word of God via augmentative readings but especially during the scripturally *exposited* pastoral sermon.

Gods People Respond-*Singing of Psalms, Hymns, & Spiritual Songs*

- ▶ Having heard God's word, the people are enabled to *joyfully* respond with the singing of songs of thanksgiving and praise.
- ▶ Musical doxology is an acceptable way to show our gratitude and affection to our faithful God.
- ▶ As we sing, we join with the angels and saints in lifting our voices in praise before our gracious God.

God Speaks- *The Lord's Supper*

- ▶ After receiving the law at Mt. Sinai, God invited Moses and the Elders to eat with him on the mountain.
- ▶ Just prior to his death, Christ celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples. On that occasion, he changed the purpose and nature of the meal to represent his body and blood fulfilled in the New Covenant.
- ▶ The communion elements *act* as “visible words and symbols” to bolster our faith and trust IN Christ. He participates in the meal.
- ▶ We are to prepare and partake “in a worthy manner”

The People Respond-*Giving of Tithes & Offerings*

- ▶ Previously, we pointed out that both O.T and N.T. worshippers regularly brought tithes and offerings in thankfulness when meeting God.
- ▶ Thus, “it is right and natural that we should want to give back to God out of our abundance.” We should do this with joyful and thankful hearts.
- ▶ The Kingdom is blessed and expanded by such gifts and offerings. (Building requires time, talent, and treasure.)

God's Benediction-*He Blesses and Sends Out His People*

- ▶ The worship service typically ends with a **benediction**, or *scriptural word of blessing and encouragement* to the whole congregation as they are *sent* into the world to fulfill the Great Commission and to minister to those in need.
- ▶ The Pastor again acts as the messenger for God.
- ▶ Receiving the benediction is of great importance to us as it is given to *strengthen and spur* us into service for the Kingdom.

CLASS SUMMARY: *Key Points to Remember*

- ▶ Worship, at its most basic level, is our means of *drawing near to and communing with God*.
- ▶ Worshipping God began in the earliest times and was a normal and regular part of life in both the O.T and N.T. for God's elect.
- ▶ God himself has prescribed when and how we are to approach him for corporate worship. This is to be done on a *regular* basis for holy purposes and may not be neglected or done errantly.
- ▶ Jewish Sabbath worship has now been changed to Sunday Sabbath worship, but the goal of coming into God's holy presence remains unchanged.
- ▶ We have access to the Father only IN Christ (our Mediator)

CLASS SUMMARY: *Key Points to Remember*

- ▶ God desires orderly and heartfelt worship. “Reformed Worship” follows scriptural patterns and principles so that we may rightly gather before God to hear from and glorify him.
- ▶ Through the preaching of the word and the sacraments, our faith is strengthened and our understanding of God’s will for our lives is enhanced. God speaks through the preached and read word. We respond through prayers, singing, and service.
- ▶ Various “elements of worship” are utilized each week to facilitate our approach to God and to open our spiritual eyes and ears to know God’s essential truths. The ordering of these elements ultimately falls to the Elders of the church.

THANK YOU!

- ▶ *I want to thank you for your attendance and participation in this class. If God moved you closer to himself, then I am pleased and give him all glory and honor.*
- ▶ Please think about these things each time you gather for worship. How we approach God matters to him and to you. Glorify God in everything.
- ▶ **Peace and Grace To You All**