

WORSHIP

The Christian's Highest Occupation

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE MANNER OF WORSHIP -- INTELLIGENT

3. Worship should be intelligent

God places no premium on ignorance. One of the purposes of the holy Scriptures is to make the believer "wise" as to what God has to say, and give him a proper understanding of both his privileges and responsibilities in this matter of worship. Spirituality and sincerity in worship must therefore be accompanied by an intelligent apprehension as to what God has revealed regarding important subject.

Paul, in his epistles, repeatedly uses the expression: "**I would not have you to be ignorant**" (I Corinthians 10:1; 12:1; II Corinthians 1:8; I Thessalonians 4:13; Romans 1:13; 11:25).

It is both interesting and instructive to observe the various subjects on which he would not have the believers to be ignorant. Perhaps one of the greatest liabilities in Christendom today, is the vast number of ignorant Christians, who seem to know little or nothing of the great fundamental truths of their most holy faith. They seem quite content to let others do their thinking for them and decide what they shall, or shall not believe. Particularly is this true in the matter of worship.

Ignorance as to what constitutes worship is evidenced by the hazy expressions of it that one sometimes hears in meetings convened for this particular purpose. This confusion of thought and expression is due to the failure of each believer to read, discover and meditate on what God has to say on the subject.

We are told that: "**God is not the Author of confusion, but of order.**"

The believer who undertakes to study the Scriptures will soon be able to arrive at an intelligent apprehension of what worship really is and govern his words and actions accordingly. In thinking of "intelligent" worship, we must not confound it with a mere theoretical, or head-knowledge of its definition. What he have in mind is the believer's heart apprehension and appreciation of God's estimate of it, that results in an upward flow of spiritual, sincere and intelligent worship to God.

Paul tells us that mere "**knowledge puffeth up**" its proud possessor, and imparts to him an exaggerated idea of his own importance (I Corinthians 8:1).

This kind of knowledge is a liability, for it hinders a person from either desiring or acquiring the wisdom that only God can give. Let us think particularly of three ways by which the believer may be enabled to become a spiritually intelligent worshipper.

(1) *He should acquire an intelligent knowledge of Scripture truth.*

This, of course, necessitates both the reading and study of the word of God. This is the price each must pay for spiritual intelligence. While it is good to read expositions of the Scriptures by sound and able men, this must never be allowed to become a substitute for one's own personal reading and study of the Word. What the believer discovers for himself, as a result of his own Bible searching, will mean much more to him than what others give him. This implies that:

He should be clear as to his own position in Christ. That is, he should learn he has been foreknown, predestinated, chosen, called, saved, justified, sanctified, accepted and **“blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.”**

As he is brought to realize these glorious truths from the word of God, his heart will be turned to sing the praises of the One who has done such great things for him.

He should be clear as to the tri-unity of the eternal Godhead. Many do not seem to be able to distinguish between the Persons in the Godhead.

One sometimes hears believers thanking the Father for having died for them on the Cross, or asking the Holy Spirit to come into them. A knowledge of the Word would enable them to appreciate the distinction of Persons in the Godhead, and deliver them from such confusion of thought and expression.

(2) *He should seek to get an intelligent grasp of Church truth*

Surely that which Christ **“loved,”** and for which He **“gave himself,”** is worthy of each Christian's most serious and earnest consideration: **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”** (Ephesians 5:25). Many believers seem to know little or nothing of this tremendous truth, and seem content to live in a haze of uncertainty regarding this great doctrine of the word of God.

(a) He should be clear as to his position as a member of the body of Christ, which is the Church of God: **“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head of all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all . . . From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”** (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:16, etc.).

He should know that he has been joined to this mystical body by the Spirit of God, and thus united to Christ, the Head, in Heaven, and also to every other believer on earth. This is **“the unity of the Spirit”** which God has made (Ephesians 4:3).

As he is brought to realize that there is but one body, with one Head; he will clearly see that there is no need for him to join some other “*body*” with another “*head*.” Thus he will endeavor to “**keep the unity of the Spirit [which has already been made] in the body of peace.**”

(b) He should be clear regarding his position as a priest unto God: “**Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light**” (I Peter 2:5-9) and “**And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen**” (Revelation 1:5-6).

As such, he is privileged to offer the “spiritual sacrifices” of his praise and worship to God: “**By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name**” (Hebrews 13:15).

He will realize that the present distinction between “*clergy*” and “*laity*” has no foundation in the Word of God, but is purely an invention of man and which has wrought untold evil.

He will recognize that he has been “*ordained*” of the Lord and, with this assurance, will not only enter into the holiest as a worshipper, but also go forth to witness for Him as a servant and herald: “**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, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)**” (Hebrews 10:19-23) and “**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you**” (John 15:16)

(c) He should be clear as to what worship really is, and its place and importance in his life, for this is his highest occupation.

We have already referred to this fact in the previous pages.

(3) *He should endeavor to gain an intelligent apprehension of the purpose of a meeting convened for the remembrance of Christ and for the worship of the Lord's people.*

Many believers apparently seem unable to sense the purpose of such a gathering.

(a) He should be clear as to the words he utters.

Words are, or should be, the result of thought. If the thought is hazy, the utterance will be correspondingly so. It surely is not too much to expect that when one rises to express the worship of the assembly, he should know why he is there, and what is the purpose of the meeting. Anything that does not rightly belong to such a gather should therefore be left unsaid.

(b) He should be clear as to the theme of hymn he gives out.

The hymn book may be a very good one, but all the hymns in it are not suitable for the immediate purpose. The selection of the right hymn at the right time therefore calls for spiritual intelligence, so that the hymn fits in with the particular theme of the meeting. Surely one would not give out a marriage hymn at a funeral! Each hymn has a distinct thought, presents a particular message and serves a definite purpose. Therefore the need for an intelligent knowledge and use of the hymn book for, by it, an assembly is enabled to express its own aspiration, praise and worship.

(c) He should be clear as to the time the meeting begins, and be there well in advance of that time.

How often such a meeting has been disturbed because of late comers who, by a little exercise of common sense, Christian courtesy, and living consideration, could easily have been there on time.

A time of quiet meditation, before the meeting is due to begin, is an excellent preparation for the season of worship that follows. There should be no rushing into the presence of God but, instead, a quiet waiting upon Him, as the believers concentrate their minds' attention and their heart's affection upon the One they have come to praise.

In Church you should be very quiet before the services start. People come to meditate on the Lord, but when you are loud, they end up meditating upon your business.

(d) He should be clear as to his deportment in such a gathering.

The very purpose of such a gathering should determine the kind of clothes he wears, and his behavior during the meeting. It is not a dress parade, at which one attracts attention to himself, nor does it exist for the display of gift and, least of all, for irreverent behavior. Especially is this true at the Lord's Supper.

The bread and the cup upon the table should remind all who are present that the One they have come to remember died to make their salvation possible, rose again and ascended to make it actual. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus is the Host at His own supper. An intelligent grasp of this fact will do much in determining one's deportment at such a meeting.

These practical and common sense suggestions regarding worship, and the believer's behaviour in a meeting for these purposes, may appear to be unnecessary to some; but we need ever to remember that **“God hath not given to us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”** (II Timothy 1:7).

The believer's possession of a Divine nature does not rob him of his common sense, but ennobles it and enables him to use it for the glory of God.

Thus the manner of the believer's worship is not the least important thing in regard to this great subject.

Each Christian should therefore see to it that the worship he presents to God, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is both spiritual, sincere and intelligent.

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