

Since Worship is at God's initiative, He alone decides what it looks like

An extension of *sola scriptura* we saw last week

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We are not to add anything to worship other than what God has specified

God alone **regulates** how He is to be worshipped

So the 2nd Commandment informs us how we are to worship God:

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. ²

So also when God instructs Moses to build the tabernacle 'after the pattern' (Exodus 25:40), and just prior to the people entering the land of promise God says (Deuteronomy 12:32)

Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

In the OT, God judges when His people try to innovate in worship for whatever reason³

Same principle continues in the NT with both Jesus and Paul's rebuke of wrong worship in churches (Matthew 15:1-4, Col. 2:18, 23 & 1 Cor. 14:27-28)

In worship we must only do what God commands;

It is wrong to think we can worship God however we like unless He expressly forbids something

- worship only made up of the **elements** God has prescribed,
- which will be expressed differently depending on **circumstances**⁴

We are to use scriptural principles in wisely determining the circumstances.

So what: Worship regulated by God's expressed command will be *biblical, simple, spiritual* and *reverent* and because it is centered on God it should give us a sense of awe and *transform* us. Our worship will not be *superficial, ritualistic, sentimental* or *entertainment*.

² Exodus 20:4-6

³ So Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10), Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:36-40), Saul's no prescribed worship (1 Sam. 15:22), Uzzah handles the ark (2 Sam. 6), reason God gives for the exile (Jer. 7).

⁴ God commands that His Word must be read as an *element* in our worship of Him, but how much of His word is read is a circumstance. Likewise for the time and length of when we meet or the style of music.

What has God commanded we do as we gather to worship as His people?

God has given 3 *means of grace* by which the Holy Spirit brings His undeserved favour to us in order to make us more like Christ:

- God's Word
- Prayer
- Baptism and the Lord's Supper (sacraments)

All three are to form part of acceptable gathered worship

God's Word

*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*⁵

As the church is the "pillar and foundation of truth," reading and preaching God's Word must be central to our gathering because through it the Holy Spirit works faith in us.

So we should **read** Scripture without preaching, explaining or teaching on it further.

A **call to worship** from God's Word demonstrates we meet at God's initiative

God's Word is to be **preached** so we understand it's meaning and are exhorted to live for Christ

*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; **reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.***⁶

Right use of sound historical **creeds** and **confessions** that teach the meaning of Scripture

We should **sing** God's Word both in inspired songs God has given (the psalms) and in other songs that reflect the birth-life-death-resurrection-ascension of Christ's redemption

A closing **benediction** and gospel **blessing** on God's people from God's Word⁷

Prayer

Prayer is a fitting response to God's invitation to gather together before Him and was central to the meeting of the early church

*I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;*⁸

Our prayer should include **corporate confession** of sin,⁹ **thanksgiving**, and **petition**

⁵ 1 Timothy 4:13

⁶ 2 Timothy 4:1-2 (see also 2 Timothy 2:2, 15, 4:2 and Titus 2:1, 7-8)

⁷ See Num. 6:22-27 and also Heb. 13:20-21 Eph. 3:16-21, Rom. 15:13, Col. 3:15-17, Jude 24-25, 1 Tim. 1:17

⁸ 1 Titus 2:8

Sacraments - Baptism and the Lord's Supper

sacrament – 'sacred thing' - 'a visible form of an invisible grace' – signs and seal of the covenant of grace as markers of the visible church – speak of union with Christ

There are only two sacraments Christ has given His church

Both sacraments apply God's Word and must be accompanied by Biblical explanation¹⁰

As baptism and the Lord's Supper are markers of the visible community of God's people both are to take place within the gathered community of God's covenant people

The cup of blessing we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹¹

Giving

Paul instructs that as God's people gather they should take a collection for the church:

- i. to aid it's proclamation of the gospel
- ii. to aid its' care of the needy and poor within the wider church

Giving is a fitting part of worship as a thankful response to all God has given us in Christ

Things to think over this week:

Think more of why we gather and what worship that is *centered on God, biblical, simple, spiritual, reverent* and intended to *transform* us, will look like.

What are the dangers of worship that is *superficial, ritualistic, sentimental or entertainment*.

Supplementary reading (available online):

D Thomas, *Regulative Principle of Worship*, www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/regulative-principle-worship/
T Challies, *Worship: Elements & Circumstances*, www.challies.com/articles/worship-elements-and-circumstances/
D Macleod, *The Regulative Principle*, www.donaldmacleod.org.uk/dm/christian-worship-the-regulative-principle/
J Frame, *A Fresh look at the Regulative Principle*, frame-poythress.org/a-fresh-look-at-the-regulative-principle-a-broader-view/

⁹ See Ezra 8-9, Nehemiah 9 and James 5:16, Revelation 2:5

¹⁰ See Matthew 28:19-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:20-26

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Key Doctrines #3

Gathering for worship*

What is worship?

We are only to worship the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

*Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.*¹

We can only worship God acceptably as we come to Him through the mediator He has ordained, Christ His Son.

We are called to worship God in all of life – Romans 12:1-2

One-day-in-seven as separated as 'holy to the Lord' since creation, still remains.

With Christ's resurrection this day moves from the 7th day to the 1st day of the week

A time for God's covenant people to gather to worship together (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Question: What should gathering together to worship look like? Why?

Who calls us to gather together?

The Lord God Himself calls His people to gather before Him (not just each other)

- so at Mount Sinai, God gathers the people He has redeemed from Egypt
- so too before the people enter the land
- Jesus gathers His disciples
- So too our gathering is a response to God's gracious invitation

God gathers us to renew covenant with Him - He is our God and we in Christ, are His people

So we gather, not *primarily* for our sake or for the sake of unbelievers but for God

Worship is *secondarily* for *encouragement* (Heb. 10:25) and gospel *proclamation* (1 Cor. 14:24)

* We will consider children in gathered worship when we consider children's relationship to the church

¹ Revelation 4:11 (see also Colossians 1:16 and Romans 1:20-21)