

Worship
The Heart of Worship (Part 1)
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We're looking, in our break between a couple of New Testament books, our study of James and our coming study of the book of Ephesians, we're looking at the issue of biblical worship. We began several weeks ago now maybe even a couple of months ago, I forget exactly when it was, looking at the issue of the wrong kind of worship, the dark side of worship if you will. The reality that the world and our own hearts are filled with idols, as Calvin said our hearts are "idol factories". We produce constantly idols. This morning we come however to the positive side of worship to the reality that there is biblical worship of the true God, and we want to ask the question, what is that, what does it look like, and how exactly do we do it?

Some of you may have seen the article in the New York Times on March 4th. They published an article with the interesting title "Darwin's god". Well that title comes from Charles Darwin's comment in a book he wrote called the *Dissent of Man*. This is what he wrote, "a belief in all pervading spiritual agencies seems to be universal." Darwin was acknowledging what this article also agrees with and acknowledges in these words, according to anthropologists, religions that share certain supernatural features: features like in a belief in a non-corporeal god or gods, belief in the afterlife, belief in the ability of prayer or ritual to change the course of human events. These religions are found in virtually every culture on earth. The article goes on to cite the fact that a Baylor University study in 2006, a survey discovered that some 92% of Americans believe in a personal god.

Well, you can see then why Darwinian scientists are trying to understand this nearly universal awareness or belief. They have concluded that it may well be, and this was actually expressed in the article, that man is hard-wired to worship. Their concern is with how, how did that happen, why is that a reality? The article presents a number of possible explanations, one of them according to a number of radical neo-atheists, as they're called, radical men in academic circles who would love to expunge humanity of any kind of religion, these men say that this sort of universal consciousness of God is, "a useless and sometimes dangerous evolutionary accident". Richard Dawkins, for example, the Oxford evolutionary biologist, wrote a book last year entitled *The God Delusion*. In that book he wrote, "religious behavior may be a misfiring, an unfortunate

bi-product of an underlying psychological propensity that was perhaps at one time useful.” Dawkins views religion in every form as “a scourge to humanity”.

Other evolutionists in the article argue that this sort of universal God consciousness must be the result of positive evolution. They say at some point early in man’s evolution there must have been some advantage to his survival to postulate the existence of a divine being, and so he did. And because of the survival of the fittest over time, those who had this belief were somehow better fitted to live in a hostile world, and they survived, and they passed along that evolutionary gene to others. Now these, of course, are ridiculous explanations. There is a very clear biblical explanation for the existence of that universal God consciousness. And by the way, I would say it’s universal. Those who don’t believe in a personal God, according to the Apostle Paul are suppressing that knowledge, according to Romans 1, but it’s still there. There is a universal consciousness of God. Why? - because there is a God who has created man. And He has, through His creation, and through His providence, and through man’s conscience, made His own existence known. And through that self-revelation, God calls for our worship.

You remember that when we began our study of biblical worship and throughout our study, we have built on three foundational principles, let me remind you of them. Number one, the end for which God made the world was His own glory; the end for which God made the world was His own glory. God did not have to act. He was not required by something outside of Himself to act, instead He chose to act to display His glory.

Principle number two then, the chief end of man therefore is to glorify God. If the chief end of creation was to bring glory to God, then that means your chief end and my chief end is as the catechism says the glory of God, to glorify God. How do we do that, how does man glorify God?

That brings us to our third foundational principle, and that is; we were made to worship. You were made to worship; the chief way intelligent beings bring glory to God is through the act of worship. We see that from throughout the display of human history, and when we look into eternity through the pages of Revelation, we see that worship will continue predominant in heaven. That is how intelligent beings, like we are, most bring glory to God is through worship of God. You were made to worship. Every human being has, in fact, as the article hinted at, been hard wired by God to worship. Every day every human being will worship, without exception. You will either worship the true God in the way that God has prescribed, or he will

commit what the Bible calls idolatry; but worship he will. He absolutely can do nothing to change that reality.

Now, today, I want to add a fourth foundational principle and it's this: God alone has the right to prescribe how we worship Him. God alone has the right to prescribe how we worship Him. If we're made to worship, then the next question is, so how do we do that? How do we accomplish that reality? The answer to that question is: only as God prescribes. To put it another way; we can worship God only in the ways that He has prescribed. Now that's the principle. I want us to examine that principle today, and I want us to begin by looking at the biblical arguments for that principle and, then secondly, the practical ramifications.

Let's look first at the biblical arguments that support that foundational principle, that we worship God only in the way He prescribes. Is that biblically true? Absolutely. The Scripture makes it clear that God cares infinitely how we worship. Let me walk you through just a few passages and, in the interest of time, it will be just a few. If I exhausted all the passages that make this point, it would be a series in and of itself. But let me just give you the foundational ones.

Turn with me to begin with this morning to Genesis 4. Extremely early in human history we learn that God cares about how we worship. You remember the story of course in Genesis 4:1, Cain the first human born into the world, comes forth from Eve, and then in verse 2,

“Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.” [Now so far, so good, both of these boys' sons of Adam and Eve; both of them involved in worthwhile occupations, nothing wrong with what either of them are doing. Verse 3,] “... it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.”

Now stop there, if you had never heard the story, if you had never read this before, you would think this was a good thing. Cain, the first person born into the world has been raised by Adam and Eve, who came to know their sin and came to know God's redemption through the death of a substitute, who were promised that there would be a person who would one day come to finally and ultimately deal with sin. They've taught their boys this, and now Cain has brought an offering, a sacrifice to the Lord. This is a good thing. Verse 4, “Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions.”

Stop there; again, it appears that Adam and Eve have had a great positive influence on their children because they both are bringing offerings to the Lord. The story doesn't end there, verse 4 says,

... And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So, Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

Now the first thing I want you to notice is that Cain brought an offering, anticipating that God would receive it. That's why he gets angry when God doesn't. So, the motive of his heart to some degree was legitimate worship. Now what happened here? Well there's a lot of discussion about exactly what happened. We can't be absolutely dogmatic, but I can tell you this; one of two things was wrong with Cain's offering. Either, number one, the content of his worship was wrong, that is he offered a sacrifice to God that was contrary to God's standard of what a sacrifice was to be. Many commentators will say, listen while it's not revealed in the pages of Genesis, it's hinted at in God's killing that animal to clothe Adam and Eve, and God undoubtedly prescribed for Cain and Abel that the sacrifices were to be blood sacrifices. That may be, we don't know for sure. It may be that the problem with Cain's offering was the content of his worship, that he offered a sacrifice contrary to God's standard. Or it may be, that his heart was wrong in offering the worship, and God knew that, and then God rejected it because of that, and you see it displayed then after the fact in Cain's anger.

We can't be dogmatic, I personally believe it's the first, that Cain understood he was to offer a different kind of sacrifice, and he chose out of his own reasoning to offer from his own the fruit of his own hands from the labor that he had put into the growth of the ground. But I can tell you this, either Cain failed to worship God in truth; that is according to God's revealed standard, or in spirit, that is with all of his heart. One of the two things was true. What I want you to see from this story is that God cares about how we worship. Every part of this passage identifies the reality that Cain thought he was worshiping God. He had the intention of worshiping God, and yet God rejected it. God cares about how we worship.

That seen in Genesis 4, but perhaps nowhere is this principle announced with more clarity, with more seriousness, with more solemnity than in Exodus 20. I want you to turn there with me this morning, and this is where we really get the heart of this great principle: Exodus 20. Let me remind you of the context here, the children of Israel had left Egypt some three months before. So, they'd had a three-month journey from Egypt through the wilderness, and they are now at the foot of Mount Sinai. We learn from Numbers 10 that they will remain here almost a year,

camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, for 11 months and 5 days, according to Numbers 10:11, they will stay right here. The first two days after they arrive at Sinai, again remember, they have been gone from Egypt only 3 months, and they're at Sinai. The first two days there are spent in physical and spiritual preparation, but then on the third day, chapter 19 tells us, the day begins with an awe-inspiring display; really a terrorizing series of events. Now, I don't have time to walk you through the entirety of chapter 19, I encourage you to read it because it's really dramatic. But let me paint the picture for you.

First of all, that morning on that third day, a thick cloud descends and rests on the mountain and out of that cloud there comes claps of thunder and bolts of lightening. We understand that here in Texas. But this is no ordinary thunder storm because accompanying it there is an increasingly loud sound of a trumpet, a trumpet begins to blow, but instead of staying at the same intensity, Moses tells us that it continued to grow louder and louder and louder until the people could hardly hear. In addition to this, smoke rose from the mountain as if from a great huge furnace. And if that wasn't dramatic enough, we're told that an earthquake shook the entire mountain.

The people are experiencing all of this reality. Moses partially ascends the mountain and God sends him back down to tell the people not to cross the boundary. As Moses tells the people that, something dramatic happens, that trumpet sound is blowing louder, ever louder, the mountain itself is shaking, it's covered by this thick cloud with lightening and thunder coming out of it. There's smoke as if from a furnace rising, and the trumpet ear piercing now, suddenly stops. And there is silence, and out of that silence all the people hear the very voice of God Himself. Look at Exodus 20:1, "Then God spoke all these words, saying,"

In fact, in Deuteronomy 5, Moses makes it even clearer that God Himself with His own voice spoke these words. What a dramatic scene. Now what follows are what we traditionally call the Ten Commandments. Literally they are in the Hebrew ten words. Each of those commands is in fact a single Hebrew word. Because encompassed in those Hebrew verbs are these great imperatives, these great commands.

So, notice the first word or the first command in verse 3, we looked at it several weeks ago, "You shall have no other gods before Me." Now this first command that God speaks deals with the object of worship, the object, there is only one God, and He alone is to be worshiped. The Hebrew reads literally, "there is not to be to you other gods to My face." "There is not to be to you other gods to My face." The word you here by the way is singular. God wasn't speaking to the crowd of 2 million Israelites. He was speaking to everyone just as He speaks to us. There is

not to be, to you and to you and to you, other gods. What does He mean by other gods? Any other objects of worship and devotion, there is not to be to you any other objects of devotion to My face, or as it's translated in the in the NASB95, before Me. What does that mean? That means in My presence, or in place of Me, or in addition to Me. All of those things are implied there. You're not to have any other objects of devotion in My presence. They're not to be in place of Me, and they're not to be in addition to Me. This command tells us that we must fear and love and worship the one true God and Him alone. That's the first word. Notice the second word in verse 4,

“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them....”

Now the first commandment dealt with the object of worship, there is only one true God, and He alone is to be the object of our worship. This second command is related to the first, but is different; this command deals with the mode or the method of our worship. Notice specifically the prohibitions that God gives us here. First of all, don't make, verse 4, you shall not make for yourself an idol. The word of idol simply refers to a figure made of wood or stone, something, anything man makes is implied in this word. It's not to be the likeness, notice, a form which we see in creation that is in heaven or earth or under the sea. It's not to be some kind of pictorial representation of any created thing. That's what God is saying. Don't make anything that is a pictorial representation of something that I've made and then make that thing an object of your worship; make that thing a channel through which you worship Me. Remember the first command dealt with the object of worship, only the one true God. This command deals with how we're to worship Him. God says don't come up with some plan to worship Me through your own improvisation, through your own ideas, your own plans, your own schemes, your own methodology.

Now obviously this command, as the first one, forbids all false worship, all forms of false worship. But it primarily forbids a visual representation of the true God as an object of worship. Now it may also include making any image of God, for example some of our brothers believe you shouldn't have any pictures of Jesus. It may include that and certainly if your conscience is convinced that's what this means, you shouldn't do that. But it certainly means we're not to make any sort of visual representation of God that becomes the channel for our worship. Now it does not include or exclude I should say, art and sculpture, all art and sculpture. Obviously, the tabernacle was commanded by God, the temple commanded by God and within those you have

things like the cherubim covering the mercy seat. You have engravings; you have various embroidery on the curtains representing divine things, you have even the brazen serpent that God commanded Moses to make, you have the rod of Aaron that was put within the Ark of the Covenant. You have the Ten Commandments and the stones on which they were written, so it's not forbidding making any art or sculpture, its forbidding making any art or sculpture that becomes either the place of worship or the channel through which you worship the true God. Notice, "don't make", that's the first command.

The second command or the second prohibition, verse 5, "don't worship". You shall not worship them. Now the Septuagint here uses a word that refers to bodily gestures such as bowing or kneeling. God says, don't make them to be an object of worship, and secondly don't worship them, that is don't worship them, don't bow before them, don't kneel before them. If you've ever seen any of the pagan religions, you see this happening. You know they have their little idols, and they bow or kneel before them. God says, don't make them, and secondly don't bow or kneel before them.

Notice thirdly in verse 5, don't "serve them". The word serve here includes all religious ceremonies, offering sacrifices, incense, etc. Don't make them, don't worship them, and don't serve them. The spiritual import of this command, listen carefully, the spiritual import of this command is incredibly far reaching; because it absolutely forbids all human invention in the worship of God. You and I don't decide how we'll worship God because we could easily stray, God says here, into idolatry.

Now what is the reason God gives for following only His prescriptions for worship? Look at verse 5, "You shall not worship them or serve them, for ..." [because, here's the reason] "... I ... am a jealous God ... I the LORD your God, am a jealous God...." This is a fascinating statement. The Hebrew implies that God becomes red with jealousy. Now you understand that this is what theologians call an anthropathism that is it is attributing human emotions to God, God doesn't have human emotions like we have. But there are things in God that can be likened to our emotions, of which our emotions are merely a picture. And so, what you have here, while God doesn't have jealousy like we do, there is some reality in God that can be accurately illustrated by human jealousy. Now remember that idolatry in any form is often described as spiritual adultery. Therefore, God says if you do that, then I will become jealous.

Exodus commentator, Sarna, puts it this way, he says, this is what God is saying, "My people, if you commit spiritual adultery in your worship, I will respond like the most fearsome wronged

husband you have ever known.” We’ve all seen jealousy and what it will do, when someone has been lied to, been sinned against. Spouse has been unfaithful; we’ve seen what that jealousy can produce. And God, while never sinful in His expression of it, is likening His response to that jealous husband. As Ligon Duncan puts it in his excellent book on worship, “betray God by idolatry, and He will deal with you like a red eyed jilted spouse.” Verse 5 says, “... for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.”

Now this expression is often misunderstood, this does not mean that children are punished for the sins of their fathers. Read Ezekiel 18, God says absolutely never do I do that. I will deal with the sinner based on his own sin. So, what does this mean, notice He says, “of those who hate Me”. You see what God is pointing out here is the reality and the power of influence. When the father embraces a wrong approach to worship, a wrong view of worship and begins to practice that wrong view of worship, the children the sons will embrace through influence, through living in that home, that same wrong approach to worship. They will embrace it, and when God finds it in those succeeding generations as is normal, because of the power of influence, He will deal with it there, just as He will deal with it in the fathers.

What I want you to see though is why this contrast is here, notice He says, in verse 5, I visit the iniquity on those who hate me, verse 6, “showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

Now folks, you and I often think in gray, but God here is very black and white. God says there are two kinds of people in the world, only two. There are those who love Me, and there are those who hate Me. Now maybe you’re here this morning, and you can’t honestly say, I love God, but you know I don’t hate Him either, after all I’m here this morning. And God says, you love Me or you hate Me. But what I want you to see is how God determines in this passage who loves Him and who hates Him. God is saying in this passage, those who worship Me as I have prescribed, love Me, and those who worship Me as I have not prescribed, hate Me. If you were to reduce this second commandment to its simplest form, we could say its theme is about worship, and this is what it tells us: that God is to be worshiped, yes, but only in the way He prescribes. Because to worship God in any other way is to show that we hate Him, and it is to invite His response as a jealous husband, as a red eyed jilted spouse. God takes how we worship very seriously.

Let me show you another passage that drives home the same point. Exodus 32, Exodus 32 twelve chapters later, and less than 40 days after that dramatic scene at the foot of Sinai, when God Himself spoke those Ten Words, those Ten Commandments. Less than 40 days, here's what happens verse 1,

“Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” Aaron said to them,” [and for reasons we'll never know to eternity, he says okay fine] “Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me.” Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought *them* to Aaron. He took *this* from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.”

Now, stop there. If that's all you'd read, you might say, well you know maybe these people who were in Egypt for so long, I mean their ancestors were there for 400 years, . maybe they have become so steeped in idolatry that they have already turned their back on the true God, and they're worshiping again the gods that they knew in Egypt. I don't think you can make that point from the text, in fact look at the next verse, verse 5, “Now when Aaron saw *this*, he built an alter before it;” [that is before this golden calf he's made,] “and Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow *shall be* a feast to...” Notice the word LORD is in all caps, in English translations when you see the word LORD like that it is a translation of the Hebrew personal name of God, Yahweh, He Is. Tomorrow will be a feast to Yahweh, to He Is, to the great I Am. You see what's happening here is not that the people have come up with a replacement for the worship of God, instead they have perverted the worship of God.

Now what is this golden calf? Well there're two possibilities; one is that it was actually intended to be a pedestal on which the invisible God of Israel was supposed to sit. This was common in the ancient world. They even did this for Baal. Baal was thought of as a human figure, and yet they often constructed a bull and the idea was that Baal rode on the back of that bull, that that was as it were his throne or his chair. It may very well be that that's what they're doing. They simply want this bull to be a channel through which they worship the true God. Or, it may be that that calf was actually to represent one of God's attributes, you see in even the Baal worship. Baal, as I said, was often a human figure, but he was sometimes pictured as a bull. Not because

they saw also as a bull, but because the bull was to picture his power. It may very well be that this is to somehow picture one of God's attributes, like His power. But regardless of which of those it was, it is a violation of the second commandment, they have through their own minds invented a way to worship the true God, and it's a violation of what God had commanded.

Notice right away two results of their wrong worship, verse 6, immorality. "So, the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." That's a euphemistic expression explained in 1 Corinthians 10, we're talking about immorality, what erupted here was a giant orgy. And let me tell you something, while that may specifically not happen, wherever the worship of God is not in keeping with how God has prescribed, there will always be loose living, always. There's a second result, verses 9 and 10, intense divine anger.

"The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them;"

Stand aside Moses, I'm going to wipe them off the planet. God had done this before, you remember, with all of humanity and saved only Noah and his family. He had plucked Abram out of Ur and made him His own, and God now says alright fine, stand aside, we're starting from scratch. You're going to be the man through whom I will build this nation. We shouldn't be surprised by that response should we? What did God say in Exodus 20? He said, "for I the Lord your God am a jealous God." I will respond as a husband sinned against.

There are many other biblical arguments for God caring about how we worship. In the interest of time I'm not going to be able to take you there, but let me just remind you of a couple: Leviticus 10, you remember Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, Moses' nephews were told they offered strange fire before the Lord. We don't know exactly what happened, but we do know this, verse 1 of Leviticus 10 says, "it was not as God had commanded," they worshiped the true God, but they worshiped in a way that was not as God commanded, and how did God respond to that. You remember fire came out and consumed those boys. Aaron's sons, Moses' nephews, incinerated in a moment because of how they worshiped God. In 1 Samuel 15, you remember Saul's violation of the commands regarding worship by making sacrifice himself, and Samuel comes to Saul, and he says listen, to obey is better than sacrifice, how dare you cross that line and worship God, even worship the true God in a way He has not prescribed.

Our Lord enters in as well, in Matthew 15 you remember He talks to the Pharisees in Matthew 15:1 to 9, and He says to them there; listen it's just like Isaiah said, it's true what Isaiah wrote, you are worshiping Me in vain because you are substituting your own traditions for what I have prescribed, for the Word of God. Manmade worship is unacceptable to Me.

You see from those texts, and honestly many others, we can see that God is concerned about how we worship. And God alone has the right to prescribe how we worship Him. That's the principle that the Scriptures we've sited clearly argue. Now those are just a few of the biblical arguments. We don't have much time remaining, so let's consider briefly the practical ramifications. I want to give you just four of them, they're many others, but let me just give you four.

Number one, as individuals we must beware of redefining God in terms we find attractive. We must beware of redefining God the way we want Him to be. You've heard people say as I have, things like, well I think God is and then you fill in the blank, or I like to think of God as.... Who cares? The question is who is God, and how has He revealed Himself, and when we redefine God in our own image, we are as surely making an idol as Aaron did that day. We may still claim to be worshiping the true God, but we in fact have chosen to worship Him according to our own inventions. When we say things like: well I know that's wrong, but God wants me happy. We have redefined God, and we are violating His command.

Practical ramification number two, we must not allow any images to become a channel of our worship of God. We must not allow any images to become a channel for our worship of God. Folks this has to do, obviously, with visual images. This is violated every day in several of the major denominations, if you will, of Christianity; in Roman Catholicism, in Eastern Orthodoxy where they worship the true God through external images that supposedly are channels through which they worship Him. That is a clear violation of what we've looked at together this morning. But we also have to be careful of worshiping God through even mental images, creating mental images through which we worship God. God has described Himself, We can only worship Him as He has described Himself. And can I add, in our day, electronic images, some movie you've seen where that becomes the image through which you worship the true God.

Number three, we are not free to redefine the purpose of the corporate gathering of the church. We are not free to redefine the purpose of the corporate gathering of the church. In our day there are well-intentioned people, brothers in Christ, who redefine why we gather, but as we will see in

the weeks ahead God has prescribed worship as the primary reason we gather, we've already seen some of that, but we'll see it again in other in other passages. This is why we gather, and we can't redefine the purpose. We can't say well you know we love, we love seekers; and therefore, we need to become a seeker friendly church, and we just need to really be on Sunday about evangelism. We won't even try to minister to the people of God, we won't really try make it worship, we're just trying to reach out. Reaching out is a commendable thing, we all ought to be, if we're not evangelizing we're disobeying Christ. But we can't redefine the reason the church gathers. We must worship God as He's prescribed, and He's prescribed that for the corporate gathering of the church.

Number four and finally, we can only include in the corporate worship those elements Scripture prescribes. We can only include in the corporate worship those elements Scripture prescribes. We've seen that this morning how serious God is about that. We have to worship Him as He has determined, not as we determine. Now there was agreement among the reformers on this basic principle. It grows, of course, out of Sola Scriptura; the Bible is the ultimate and only inspired authority in faith and practice. But then, there came a split, a disagreement. Some followed what was called the Normative Principle and others followed what was called the Regulative Principle. Let me very briefly explain those to you. The Lutherans and the Anglicans joined with the Roman Catholics in embracing the Normative Principle, the Normative Principle teaches this: whatever Scripture does not forbid is acceptable in worship. In other words, the Normative Principle asks: where does Scripture forbid this practice in worship, and if we can't point to a passage where it forbids it, then it's okay to include it. If you're familiar with those denominations that hold to the Normative Principle, you now understand why they do some of what they do.

The second position, the reformed, in of all stripes and colors, embrace the opposite position called the Regulative Principle. The Regulative Principle teaches this: only that which Scripture actually prescribes is acceptable in the worship of God. In other words, you don't have to find a place where it's forbidden. All you have to do is ask: does the Bible command or sanction this. John Calvin put it this way, "God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His word." Both the Westminster Confession, representing the Presbyterians, and the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689, representing the Baptists and all that flowed out of them: the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by God Himself and so is limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture. The Regulative Principle asks:

where does Scripture command or sanction this practice, and if not, we will not allow it into worship.

As you've seen this morning, I think that is what the Scriptures teach. We are in danger of straying from the genuine worship of God when we include human invention of any kind, even well intentioned, into God's worship. The further we get away from God's directions, the less we actually worship, and the more likely it is that we will stray into the violation of God's clear commands. Now, folks we'll talk more in detail about the elements of corporate worship in the future, but let me just summarize them for you as we close our time together this morning.

Here's what Scripture prescribes. First of all, sing the Scripture. Sing the Scripture, that is sing to God music rooted in the truth of God's Word. It doesn't have to be psalms only, we'll talk about that when we get to music, but the truth of it ought to be rooted in the Word of God. You shouldn't, as a well-known church ended their service as people left, have playing and singing "Car Wash", the 70's song. It's unacceptable, we sing Scripture.

Secondly, we pray the Scripture. Our prayers grow out of our response to the Scripture. That doesn't mean we have to pray only the words of the Scripture themselves. It means our prayers reflect the content of Scripture and our response to that content.

Thirdly we read the Scripture. That's prescribed in Timothy. We'll look at that in detail. We teach the Scripture; just as I'm doing this morning. This is an act of worship.

We give our offerings to see true Scriptural worship supported here and extended elsewhere. That's an act of worship.

And then finally, we see the Scripture acted out in two signs or ceremonies: baptism and the Lord's Table.

Now folks, if you understand this, that this is what God prescribes for worship, it adds solemnity to what we do when we gather together on Sundays. But even more so it adds joy. Think about this with me for a moment. As we do these things I've just mentioned with the right heart, we know that this is what God has prescribed, and so we know that it truly honors and glorifies Him, it brings joy to His heart. This morning if you have with your whole heart sung the Word, prayed the Word, read the Word together, listened to the Word taught. If you've been worshiping in that way, then you have been worshiping in exactly the way God commanded, and

He's pleased. As we see the Word acted out in the ordinance of Communion in just a moment, we are truly worshiping. We are worshiping God in the way He has prescribed. God alone has the right to prescribe how we worship. We'll look at what He has prescribed in the weeks ahead.

Let's pray together.

Father, we see how serious You are about how You are worshiped. Father, help us to take it seriously as well.

Thank You for all of the ways You've given us to worship including the opportunity even now to express to You our love and to see the Scripture acted out in this ordinance of the Lord's Table. I pray Father, that You would help us to do it as a true act of worship, knowing that it brings You joy, and it benefits us as well as we remember our Lord and His death.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.