

**The Gospel of John (26);
“Jesus and the Woman of Samaria” (4)**

Introduction:

Today we will consider further what our Lord Jesus taught this woman of Samaria. Her life was transformed through her meeting and coming to know the identity of Jesus, when she placed her faith in Him. Jesus spoke to her and she believed His Word. Similarly, the Lord speaks to you and me through these recorded words. May we also believe His words and thereby receive blessing from God through Him.

One of the significant truths that our Lord revealed to this Samaritan woman was the nature and manner of worship that is desired by God the Father. We read in John 4:23 and 24 our Lord’s words,

²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Today we will consider more carefully what it is to worship God rightly and how we might become better worshippers of our God.

We concluded last week with the woman’s comment to Jesus that Jews and Samaritans worshipped God on different mountains (5:20). Jesus’ response to her is in verses 21ff:

²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Jesus gave the woman a command: “*believe Me.*” She should believe Him for she had been right in her assessment of Him that He *was* a prophet. He was revealing to her things she had never heard a man say. He told her that He knew who she was and He recounted to her the details of her sinful life. But as a prophet He also spoke to her of things contained in the Hebrew (OT). He explained them to her in a way that no one before her had ever understood. It is clear that she obeyed the Lord’s command in that she did believe His word to her.

Jesus said, “*the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.*” The Lord Jesus declared in these few words that a major change in God’s dealings with mankind was to take place. God the Father would be worshipped by His people irrespective of any place on earth. He declared that God the Father would receive *her* worship without consideration of a physical location.

Now the Lord did not overtly state it here in this verse, but certainly it is implicit in our Lord’s words: *He is the true temple* and anyone anywhere can offer true worship to God the Father through Him and the Father would receive it. John’s Gospel had already declared this truth earlier in chapter 2. The true temple of God is no longer in Jerusalem and never will be again.

When Jesus said, “*The hour is coming*”, He was alluding to His Passion, when He would die upon His cross and be raised the third day. The removal of the physical temple as the central place of true worship of God would be replaced by the temple of Jesus’ body, when He died on the cross to make atonement for sinners and rise again to be enthroned as King over the Kingdom of God. He would then pour out the Holy Spirit upon His people on the Day of Pentecost. From the cross onward, and particularly with the giving of

the Holy Spirit to His people, true worshippers would be able to worship God the Father through Jesus Christ, who is the true temple, the true sacrifice, and the true High Priest of His people.

Let us examine and consider what our Lord has taught us regarding true worship.

I. All people everywhere are worshippers at heart

Our Lord spoke with concern for this woman, but He also spoke the truth directly to her. She had stated that Jews and Samaritans differed in their understanding where God should be worshipped. Jesus then said to her, “*You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.*” Both the Samaritans and the Jews were worshippers.

People are inherently religious in nature. Anywhere and everywhere in the world, nearly everyone is a religionist. People are god worshippers by nature. It is an essential part of being human. Animals are not worshippers of gods. Only people are; all people are. Oh, yes, there are many who are *secularists* in their worldview. But if they were in a pressure or difficult life situation, their propensity to religious belief would surface. Even atheists are worshippers at heart. They will devote themselves to some cause, perhaps world peace, or the environment, more often themselves, as the object of their worship. We must give devotion to something; that is our nature. All people everywhere are worshippers. It is what we are as human beings. It is what we do. God created us as worshippers.

What is it for people to worship? Generally speaking, people “worship” that to which they show the greatest regard and importance, for what they value most in life. In this broad sense, people worship their “gods” that may be in the form of their possessions or health, their power or wealth, their appearance or performance, or they worship those persons they think have arrived or have achieved that which they desire for themselves. False worship is also called by another name: **idolatry**.

There are several aspects to the sin of idolatry that should be considered. At the core the issue is this: *we commit idolatry when we set up something other than God to which we devote our hearts*. Paul admonished the believers at the church at Corinth: “And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play’” (1 Cor. 10:7). Idolatry, therefore, is much more than merely using images in the worship of God. Idolatry is a very common and broad kind of sin that we commit. Sadly, we are all too ignorant of the idols that we have set up in our hearts. **Os Guinness** wrote:

Idolatry is the most discussed problem in the Bible and one of the most powerful spiritual and intellectual concepts in the believer’s arsenal. Yet for Christians today it is one of the least meaningful notions and is surrounded with ironies. Perhaps this is why many evangelicals are ignorant of the idols in their lives... Contemporary evangelicals are little better at recognizing and resisting idols than modern secular people are... There can be no believing communities without an unswerving eye to the detection and destruction of idols.

As we had mentioned not long ago, it was **John Calvin** who said, “The human heart is a factory of idols... Every one of us is, from his mother’s womb, expert in inventing idols.” One could say that much of the Christian life is taken up with our resistance to set up idols in our hearts to which we would become more devoted to than we are to our God, and to the casting down of those idols when we discover that we have set them up. And so, the problem of idolatry is an extensive and pervasive matter. This sin is present to the degree that we do not love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and our neighbor as our self. Idolatry is the sin of worshipping the wrong god or the right God in the wrong way.

Jesus said to this woman, “*You worship what you do not know.*” The Samaritans were worshippers, but all of their worship was false worship. They thought that they had been worshipping the true God in a true way. But actually they worshipped what they did not know. They were ignorant even while they were very religious.

Most people are religious in nature. They are as this woman. They worship God in ignorance. They are either ignorant of the true God they think that they are worshipping, or they are ignorant in the manner that they are worshipping God.

Many worship false gods, gods who do not exist. They are the fabrications of human imagination, fashioned and shaped by superstition. The prophet **Isaiah** described their foolishness. He wrote of the ignorance of those who worship gods that they have invented.

⁹Those who make an image, all of them are useless,
And their precious things shall not profit;
They are their own witnesses;
They neither see nor know, that they may be ashamed.

¹⁰Who would form a god or mold an image
That profits him nothing?

¹¹Surely all his companions would be ashamed;
And the workmen, they are mere men.
Let them all be gathered together,
Let them stand up;
Yet they shall fear,
They shall be ashamed together...

¹⁸They do not know nor understand;
For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see,
And their hearts, so that they cannot understand.

¹⁹And no one considers in his heart,
Nor is there knowledge nor understanding to say,
“I have burned half of it in the fire,
Yes, I have also baked bread on its coals;
I have roasted meat and eaten it;
And shall I make the rest of it an abomination?
Shall I fall down before a block of wood?”

²⁰He feeds on ashes;
A deceived heart has turned him aside;
And he cannot deliver his soul,
Nor say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?” (**Isaiah 44:9-11, 18-20**)

The world’s billions of people worship many gods who are no gods. They are idolaters because they worship idols, gods that do not exist. The gods of **Hinduism** does not exist. There are about 1 billion people who practice Hinduism in the world today. Their “scriptures” claim that they have 330 million different gods. Jesus would say to them, “You worship what you do not know.” The god of **Islam** is a false god. Allah as defined by Islam does not exist. There are estimates of 1.2 to 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. It is the world’s fastest growing religion. Jesus would say to them, “You worship what you do not know.” The gods of **Mormonism**, **Jehovah’s Witnesses**, and **Christian Science**, and all other Christian cults, are no gods. They are fabrications of the originators of those religions. Jesus would say to them, “You worship what you do not know.” All of these people worship their gods in ignorance in that their gods do not exist.

II. God created people to worship Him only.

Of course God created us to worship Him, and Him only. All other worship is false worship. It is idolatry to worship anything or anyone other than God. God has commanded us to worship Him as He has prescribed in His Word, the Bible.

What, then, is biblical worship, the nature of true worship for which God created us? ***Biblical worship is when people render unto God heart-felt praise and thanksgiving, while proclaiming through their words and thoughts who He is in His essential and manifested glory.***

But there are many who claim to be worshipping the true God, but they do so in a false way. This is what our Lord said to this woman at the well. The Samaritans were not Jews, but they claimed to worship the same God as the Jews. But they did so in a different way than the Jews. They worshipped on Mount Gerizim rather than Mount Zion. They claimed to follow the books of Moses, but they did not do so. They had a substitute priesthood, who served in a substitute temple. Jesus told this woman what they needed to do in order to worship the true God. Again, Jesus said to this woman, “You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, *for salvation is of the Jews.*”

The manner in which true worshippers worship God changed fundamentally with the coming of the Messiah.

²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Before the coming of Jesus Christ, God had prescribed the place and the manner in which His people were to worship God. For example, God had told **Abraham** where and how to worship Him. In Genesis 22:5 God said,

“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

Later Abraham told the young men who had traveled there with him, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and *I will go yonder and worship*, and we will come back to you” (22:5). There were many occasions in the early portions of the Bible story when the people of God took it upon themselves to worship God regardless of the location, because God had not yet restricted His worship to a particular location.

But with the coming of *the law of Moses*, God gave clear and different instruction as to where and how He was to be worshipped. God at first prescribed a temporary and portable tent or *tabernacle* in which He would dwell among His people and would be able to come into His presence and worship Him. But He restricted who it was that came into His presence and He precisely prescribed the manner in which they could approach Him.

The temporary and moveable tabernacle gave way to the permanent *temple* in Jerusalem. Over and over again Moses had revealed that God would lead His people into the promised land where He would show them the place where He would place His name and there be worshipped by His people (cf. Deut. 16:2, 6, 11, 15, 16). Solomon built that temple, in which Israel worshipped God for nearly four centuries. That temple was destroyed (586 BC) and then later rebuilt (536 BC). But the temple only foreshadowed and proclaimed the manner in which God would be worshipped, when He would send the Messiah into the world to save His people and restore them to a relationship with Himself.

With the coming of the Lord Jesus the place and manner which God prescribed how He would be worshipped changed forever. True worshippers would no longer be required to worship God in a particular physical location or in the outward visible manner that He had required formerly of His people. Jesus told this woman,

“Woman, believe Me, *the hour is coming* when you will neither on this mountain, *nor in Jerusalem*, worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But *the hour is coming, and now is*, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Who, then, are true worshippers of God?

III. True worshippers of the true God

1. True worshippers of God are Trinitarian in their worship with their primary focus of worship directed to God the Father.

Jesus indicated to this woman that the worship of God's people should be principally offered to **God the Father**. We are Trinitarian. We believe in our Triune God. Christians are monotheists; we believe in one God. This one God is eternally the Blessed Holy Trinity--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our **1689 Baptist Confession of Faith** states the matter clearly with great precision. Of our God it records,

In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him. (Article 2, paragraph 3)

We believe in our Triune God. Christians are monotheists; we believe in One God. This One God is eternally the Blessed Holy Trinity-- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although each of the Persons of the Blessed Holy Trinity are together the subject and object of our worship, our primary focus of worship is directed toward God the Father. This is what our Lord Jesus said,

The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship **the Father** in spirit and truth; for **the Father** is seeking such to worship Him.

This is a foundational and very important matter. A proper acknowledgment and practice of this truth will preserve the Lord's people from much error. I remember hearing many years ago a sermon on cassette tape by **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** in which he addressed on this matter. He was emphasizing the importance of balance and order in the Christian life and how a biblical belief and practice of Trinitarian worship will preserve this balance. He told of some who emphasize the Second Person of the Godhead to the neglect of the Father and the Holy Spirit. They will be in danger of becoming too informal and casual in their worship and manner of living the Christian life. "Jesus is my buddy and He walks with me and talks with me, even in my sin." They will see the immanence of God, Jesus is our Emmanuel, being interpreted as "God with us", but their conception of the transcendence and holiness of God can become weak. But there are others who emphasize the Holy Spirit to the exclusion of the Father and the Son. They will tend toward subjectivism and experientialism in their worship and practice. There will be little concern and attention to doctrinal knowledge or reverence in their worship. They emphasize experience to the neglect of truth. But there are also those who emphasize God the Father to the exclusion of the Son and the Holy Spirit. They will tend to view God only as holy, transcendent, and perhaps unapproachable. The worshipper will not easily feel forgiven or accepted or close to His God. But the way to preserve truth and balance is to direct worship to God the Father, through the merit and work of His Son Jesus Christ, by means of the power and presence of the Blessed Holy Spirit. And this is what our Lord has affirmed here when He said,

The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the *Father in spirit and truth*; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

2. True worshippers of God worship the Father in spirit and truth.

a. True worshippers of God worship the Father in *spirit*.

When Jesus said that true worshippers must worship the Father in “spirit”, He was not speaking directly of the Holy Spirit. He was saying that true worshippers worship God in the spiritual realm, not the physical. However, certainly it is true that to worship in spirit necessitates knowledge of the person and power of the Holy Spirit. And when He said that true worshippers must worship the Father in “truth”, He was not speaking directly of Himself, the Truth. But to worship in truth necessitates knowledge of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Such worship, therefore, will not only be spiritual instead of physical, inward instead of outward, but it will also be directed to the true God as set forth in Scripture and as displayed in the work of redemption.¹

Since the coming of Jesus Christ into the world and the accomplishment of His mission, all outward carnal forms of worship are no longer the proper way of worshipping God. While under the law of God as a covenant, the people of God worshipped God in a specified physical place using specified physical means. True worshippers are no longer to use these means to worship God. There is no such thing as a holy place. Please forgive me if my directness is offensive:

Roman Catholicism, the Eastern Orthodox, many Protestants who have forgotten their protestant heritage and teaching, are wrong in teaching promoting places as holy places of veneration and places in which God may be worshipped better than in other places.

The only places that are holy places in the world today is where and when true worshippers gather together to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Can you imagine how the degree of tension in the Middle East could be alleviated if all would simply believe and act upon the words of our Lord? “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will ***neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem***, worship the Father.” Much of the difficulty of the Middle East situation is due to false religion and a false view of the proper way to worship the true God.

Our Lord’s words suggest that the true worship of God is no longer performed by using carnal means. Prior to the coming of Jesus Christ, God had prescribed that His worship be conducted in a particular place, using specified means of animal and grain offerings, offered to him by a specified priesthood, who were identified by physical lineage, qualified by stipulated clothing and procedures of preparation of cleansing. That all came to an end with the coming of Jesus Christ. That true worship is to be in spirit means that carnal means are not to be used in His worship. We repudiate the idea that physical alters are necessary to offer a physical sacrifice, by a specified priesthood, in order to worship God rightly. We would say that is false worship of God. Many of the early Reformers and all of the English puritans rightly stood and preached against these things for they rightly saw that these were man’s carnal inventions that did not enable but obscured the true worship of God. Among the English puritans it resulted in The Vestment Controversy. The Puritans rejected and refused to where the clerical clothing that the Church of England came to demand its clergy wear in the performance of their duty. Puritans were jailed and many were banished because of their stand against these carnal inventions of men that were used in the worship of God. ***Carnal means of worshipping God is what sustains religionists in their so-called worship long after they have departed from worshipping the Father in spirit and truth.***

When Jesus said to this woman that the hour had arrived when true worshippers were to worship in spirit, He meant that ***the attitude and condition of the heart was essential to the true worship of God.*** There may be some who come to this church every week but have never truly worshipped God. Jesus said to some,

Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:
‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth,

¹ William Hendriksen, **John**, New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1953), p. 167.

And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me. (Matt. 15:8)

We are no worshippers of God unless our hearts are in it. We should always pray as the psalmist,

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer” (Psa. 19:14)

b. True worshippers of God worship the Father in *truth*.

We will not expand on this but will only make a few comments about this matter this morning. There are those who do not worship God in truth. In reality, they do not worship God. This speaks of the necessity and role of the mind and its understanding of doctrine in the true worship of God. Many who would claim the loudest that they are sincere worshippers of God claim that doctrine is deadening to true worship. The Lord Jesus said that it is essential to true worship. If people are not right in their doctrine, they cannot be right in their hearts. They might be sincere, but sincerity void of truth is merely *zeal without knowledge*, which God condemns (cf. Rom. 10:2).

When people are weak in doctrine, when they fail to worship God in truth, then they will tend to invent doctrines and practices that are forbidden by God. When our Lord spoke sternly about defective hearts in worship, He attributed the problem to *defective teaching* respecting the true worship of God. Here is the full statement of our Lord:

Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:
‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me.
*And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*’ (Matt. 15:7-9)

Truth is essential to true worship of God.

Just as there are many who have gathered in places this morning whose minds are being directed to things of God but their *hearts* are far from Him, so there are those who are gathering this morning whose hearts are directed towards God but their *minds* are far from Him.

God has said of them, “*And in vain they worship Me.*” All of their time and effort are in vain—useless. God does not regard what they did unto God as worship. They had offered, but God had not received what they offered Him. They may go on their way that thinking that they have really pleased God, but God has in actuality been offended by their attitude and behavior in that which they have presumed to be worship. We should be very afraid of only having an outward show of devotion when there remains a cold indifference on the inside.

On the other hand, those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth are of great joy to God. The Father delights when He is worshipped in spirit and in truth. The Son delights when the Father is worshipped in spirit and truth. The Holy Spirit delights when the Father is worshipped in spirit and truth. May our Lord forgive us of all our weak and failed efforts to worship Him. May we be true worshippers. The Father is looking for such ones who purpose and resolve to be so.

IV. True worshippers of the true God prepare themselves for the worship of God

We have seen that we are worshippers of God, and that God the Father is looking for you and me to worship Him in spirit and in truth. It stands to reason, therefore, that although each of us are called to worship God, and we all entered this morning in the worship of God, some of us will worship God this

morning perhaps better than others among us. God is most pleased with those of us who worship Him who truly and fully worship Him in spirit and the in truth. And it is true that He accepts the worship of “the least” among us who worship Him, for the Word of God says of Him, “Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise” (Matt. 21:16). But some of us, nevertheless, worship God in a manner and in a measure that is beyond that which others have offered God.

One of the ways in which our worship may be improved or enhanced is in the preparation of our soul to worship God in spirit and truth. Whenever we come to worship God, whether it be on this principle occasion of our Lord’s Day gathering together, or when you come to worship before God as a family or in your individual quiet times with the Lord, the proper preparation of our soul is vitally important. We might ask why and how this may be done. But first, let us affirm that...

1. We are greatly honored by God to be invited to come before Him in worship.

What was said of ancient Israel could certainly said of us, spiritual Israel. Consider *first* what Moses said in **Deuteronomy 4:7**, “*For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?*” That God has called us to call on Him is a great privilege, and He confers great honor on those who are so privileged. A nation in God’s eyes is great not because of its number of citizens, the greatness of its power among nations, its wealth or technological advances, or not even due to its freedoms that it enjoys. *God regards a nation as great that worships Him rightly.* So it is with His church, that “holy nation”, spiritual Israel, which He calls by His name, whose citizens call on Him. Peter wrote of the church of Jesus Christ,

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, *a holy nation*, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises (or excellencies) of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2:9)

To proclaim the praises or the excellencies of Him is what we do in worship (and at other times). It is our great privilege that God called us and sanctified us for this glorious priestly work.

A *second* passage we might consider is **Numbers 16**. Here the Lord rebuked the sons of Korah for having failed in their performance of right worship of God. They were Levites, who had been entrusted with much responsibility in the care and maintenance of the tabernacle. But they wanted more. They also wanted to be priests like the sons of Aaron. Here is the account:

Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; ²and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. ³They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?”

⁴So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face; ⁵and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, “Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him. ⁶Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; ⁷put fire in them and put incense in them before the LORD tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the LORD chooses is the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!”

⁸Then Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi: ⁹*Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them;* ¹⁰*and that He has brought you near to Himself*, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also? ¹¹Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD. And what is Aaron that you complain against him?”

The Lord in His judgement then killed these sons of Korah. We read of God's judgment in **verses 31-35** of this chapter.

³¹Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, ³²and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. ³³So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly. ³⁴Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also!"

³⁵And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

The sons of Korah were greatly privileged as Levites. God had brought them "*near to Himself.*" The sons of Aaron were more greatly privileged, in that they were priests who served within the tabernacle. But you and I are more greatly privileged than any of them, in that they came to worship God in that which was physical, typical, and temporal, but we worship God in the realm of the spiritual, the actual, and the eternal. Moses asked rhetorically, "*Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you to bring you near to Himself?*" No, it is a great thing. And it is more so with us. We are greatly privileged and blessed to be called by God to come into His presence to worship Him.

A *third* passage we might consider is **Psalm 73:28**, in which David spoke of the blessedness of being a true worshipper of God. Here are David's words after He had come into the sanctuary (temple) of God to worship Him:

²⁵Whom have I in heaven but You?

And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.

²⁶My flesh and my heart fail;

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

²⁷For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish;

You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.

²⁸***But it is good for me to draw near to God;***

I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,

That I may declare all Your works.

Those who are privileged to worship God as He has prescribed are promised to have God as their God, and they only enjoy the salvation from sin that He brings to them.

Here are the comments of an old Puritan, **Jeremiah Burroughs**, on verse 28 of Psalm 73:

There you may see how the prophet David highly esteemed the great honor that the lord put on him in his being near God: "But it is good for me to draw near to God." Mark how he speaks: "It is good for me." Why? Verse 27: "For lo, they that are far from Thee shall perish. Thou hast destroyed all them that go a-whoring from Thee (KJV)." Base hypocrites, base apostates, they are gone a-whoring from Thee. Their hearts are carnal; they did not find that contentment and satisfaction in Thy worship as Thy saints do. Therefore, they are gone a-whoring from Thee; but it is good for me to draw near to Thee."²

Burroughs went on to express a prayer with regard to himself and the privilege that was his to worship God:

² Jeremiah Burroughs, **Gospel Worship** (Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1990, orig. 1648), p. 53.

I bless myself in drawing near to Thee, Lord, and I bless the time that ever I did draw near to Thee, and I bless those ways wherein my soul has drawn near to God. Such as worship God rightly, and delight in the worship of God, are such as have great honor put upon them. They draw nigh to God.³

Since we are greatly honored by God to be invited to come before Him in worship, and so great benefit comes to us who worship Him rightly...

2. We should prepare ourselves for the worship of God.

How carefully we should prepare our souls to come before God to worship Him! Consider these words of Scripture:

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. ²Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. (Ecc. 5:1-2)

And,

¹⁹Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, ²²***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. (Heb. 12:19-22)

Since this matter of worshipping God is so important, and doing so rightly brings such blessing and doing so wrongly results in such great cursing, we should be ***care-full*** and ***pre-(pre)pared*** to come before Him.

Let us consider what God said to Moses in order to prepare His people for meeting Him when He was about to come down to them upon Mount Sinai. We read in **Exodus 19:9-11**,

So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

¹⁰Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. ¹¹And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

The people were to prepare themselves for the great event when God would come to them and them before God.

Much later the prophet Samuel gave instruction for the need of preparation to worship of God. God had instructed Samuel to go to Bethlehem to anoint young David as king. Samuel did so, giving instruction to the people to prepare themselves for their worship of God.

⁴So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, “Do you come peaceably?”

⁵And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

Similarly, we are to prepare ourselves to come into His presence whenever and wherever we are to worship Him. Again, here are Burroughs’ words:

The God whom we worship is a great and glorious God and, having to deal with such an infinite, glorious dreadful Majesty, it is fitting that we should make preparation when we come nigh unto Him.

³ Ibid, p. 54.

Therefore in Exodus 19:10, when God came among the people to give them His Law, He required that they should wash their clothes and be ready the third day, for the third day the Lord would come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of the people.

God did not stand so much upon their clothes, but it was an inward washing. Now, my brethren, if when God came to give the Law they were to so prepare, then certainly when we are to come to worship God in the way of the gospel we are to prepare as well as they, because God is coming...

So when you go to worship God, you expect (or should expect) that God will come to you and that your heart should be drawn to God—and, therefore, you should make some preparation...⁴

We need to prepare ourselves for the worship of God for there are so many obstacles and hinderances before us to prevent us from worshipping God rightly. We are easily put off in our thinking and hearts from the matter of true, spiritual worship. The trials and troubles of daily life, the hardening of our hearts that always takes place that must be countered, the great matters that are before us when we come to worship, all press upon us our need for spiritual preparation for our worship of our God in spirit and truth.

2. How, then, do we prepare ourselves for the worship of God?

We could identify **five matters** that should be addressed by us in our preparation if our worship of God is to be what it should be. These are set forth by **Jeremiah Burroughs**:

(1) First, in possessing the heart with the right apprehension of God before whom we are coming to worship.

Meditation is a good preparation to holy duties. And these are the general headings of our meditation for our preparation to duty: what God He is, with whom we have to deal. Meditate on God's attributes.⁵

(2) The second matter in our preparation for true worship is to put away from our heart every known sin. The Psalmist wrote of coming before God to worship Him. He wrote in **Psalm 66:16-18**:

¹⁶Come and hear, all you who fear God,
And I will declare what He has done for my soul.

¹⁷I cried to Him with my mouth,
And He was extolled with my tongue.

¹⁸***If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.***

The Apostle Peter quoted Psalm 34 in his epistle:

“He who would love life
And see good days,
Let him refrain his tongue from evil,
And his lips from speaking deceit.

¹¹Let him turn away from evil and do good;
Let him seek peace and pursue it.

¹²***For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their prayers;
But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.***” (1 Peter 3:10-12)

⁴ Ibid, pp. 56f.

⁵ Ibid, p. 63.

(3) The third way that we may prepare ourselves for the worship of God is “the disentangling of the heart from the world and from all occasions and businesses of the world.” Burroughs posited this self-analysis:

“I am to worship God, but how is my heart ensnared and entangled in this and the other business? Now when I come to worship God, I must lay aside all.” He wrote: There’s the preparation of the heart, separating it from such a work. That’s the nature of sanctification: separating a thing from common use. “I am to worship God. Now I must labor to separate my heart for the worship of God. Now I must labor to separate my heart from common use. At other times God gives me liberty to let my heart to common uses, but, when I come to worship Him, I must separate my heart from all common uses so that my heart may be wholly for God.”

(4) Fourthly, in our preparation we should watch and pray. We should watch our hearts. We should prepare our hearts for prayer. We should not allow pleasures or duties to distract us from our preparation to worship our God.

(5) Our preparation involves our readiness and dependence on the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable us to enable us to worship God rightly. We must prepare to worship in spirit by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to ask our Savior and Lord to fill us with the Holy Spirit as enter our formal and corporate worship of our God.

We thank God that He has blessed us with the privilege to worship Him in spirit and truth through Jesus Christ. May He enable us to worship Him rightly, more fervently, and that, according to His truth.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,
according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church
by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20f)
