

Theology for Life
Faith Presbyterian Church
Lesson 28: Worship

Last Time: *God has designed the State to restrain the influence of sin in the world. He gives the power of the sword to physically threaten and punish. The State has no spiritual authority. God designed the church for redemption. Its power is ministerial and declarative.*

Who is Worship for?

It is for God

WCF 21.1a *The light of nature sheweth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might.*

- *"God's worthiness ensures that God-centered worship could never be in vain." Richard John Neuhaus*
- *"For my name's sake, I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, so that I may not cut you off." Isaiah 48:9*

It is for God's People

- **1Cor. 14:5**
*I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive **edification**.*
- God is the object of worship, yet God calls us to worship for our edification and growth in grace.

It is for the World

- Note Paul's advice concerning public worship:
"If therefore the whole church comes together... and if an unbeliever enters...they are called to account by all, the secrets of their hearts are disclosed and so, falling on their face, they will worship God and declare that God is really among you..." 1Cor.14:23ff
- Tim Keller: *Evangelism in Worship*
*"God commanded Israel to invite the nations to join in declaring his glory. Zion is to be the center of world- winning worship (Isaiah 2:2-4; 56:6-8.) "Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord...so the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship the Lord" (Psalm 102:18.) Psalm 105 is a direct command to believers engage in evangelistic worship. The Psalmist challenges them to "make known among the nations what he has done" (v.1.) How? "Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of his wonderful acts" (v.2) Thus believers are continually told to sing and praise God before the unbelieving nations. (See also Psalm 47:1; 100:1-5.) God is to be praised **before all the nations**, and as he is praised by his people, the nations are summoned and called to join in song."*

Can We Worship Incorrectly?

The private nature of religion has prevented us from critiquing another's expression of worship. As long as it is authentic, who are we to judge? This subjective view of worship doesn't fit with the Bible.

Deuteronomy 12:4–5, 13-14, 32

[4] You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way. [5] But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go...[13] Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, [14] but at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you... "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

Leviticus 10:1–2

[1] Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. [2] And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

1 Corinthians 11:27

[27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

The Regulative Principle

Westminster Confession of Faith 21.1

The light of nature sheweth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

BOCO, Chapter 47 on *The Principles and Elements of Public Worship*

47-1: Since the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible, and from no other source. The Scriptures forbids the worshipping of God by images, *or in any other way not appointed in His Word*, and requires the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in His Word.

T. David Gordon notes, *"the issue that gave birth to the regulative principle was the nature and limits of church-power."*

Forms and Elements

PCA Book of Church Order, Chapter 47-1

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Some things are mandated by scripture and would legitimately be categorized as sin if neglected, added to, or changed. Other things scripture gives us freedom in. How do we know which is which?

1. Elements

BCO 47-9

The Bible teaches that the following are proper elements of worship service: reading of Holy Scripture, singing of psalms and hymns, the offering of prayer, the preaching of the Word, the presentation of offerings, confessing the faith and observing the Sacraments; and on special occasions taking oaths.

1. **Word:** Read and Preached, and Confessed
2. **Prayers:** Spoken and Sung
3. **Sacraments:** Baptism, Lord's Supper
4. **Fellowship:** Collection and Vows

Compare with the snapshot of the early church found in Acts 2:42–47

[42] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [43] And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. [44] And all who believed were together and had all things in common. [45] And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. [46] And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47] praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

What about everything else, things that are not elements but still a part of worship?

2. Forms

BCO 47-6

"the Lord Jesus Christ has prescribed no fixed forms for public worship but, in the interest of life and power in worship, has given his Church a large measure of liberty in this matter. It may not be forgotten, however, that there is true liberty only where the rules of God's word are observed and the spirit of the Lord is, that all things must be done decently and in order, and that God's people should serve Him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness..."

T. David Gordon, *"Churches that impose on people in public worship elements without biblical warrant have unceasing disharmony and controversy. By contrast, churches that impose no such matters on people have church-fellowship free of controversy or bitterness regarding this aspect of church-life..."*

...The regulative principle has never argued that the forms of worship are fixed by scriptural command; to the contrary, to fix and require them would have been considered an objectional

imposition of a liturgy. In fact, the regulative principle was largely developed as a defense against such imposition by the Church of England."

Forms and Vernacular

Why else is it so crucial that scripture prescribed no fixed forms for public worship? It is the very principle that enables us to worship in English and have access to the gospel.

- **Acts 2:6**

*And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native **language** of each.*

- **Acts 2:8**

*And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native **language**?*

- **1Cor. 14:5**

*I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive **edification**.*

*"the forms for public worship have value only when they serve to express the **inner** reverence of the worshipper and his sincere devotion to the true and living God. And only those whose hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit are capable of such reverence and devotion."*
(BCO 47:5)

If the regulative principle preserves the doxology of worship, the vernacular principle preserves the edification in worship.

As directed to both the believing and unbelieving elect, the worship will be edifying, even as it is first and foremost doxological.

1Cor. 14:12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the **edification** of the church that you seek to excel.

1Cor. 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for **edification**.

The Covenantal Pattern in Worship— Dialogical Movements after the patterned Gospel logic.

What is the pattern of the gospel? (adapted from Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Worship*)

- Recognizing God's character
- Realizing our sinfulness
- Receiving God's grace and assurance through Christ's work
- Responding by faith with thanksgiving and dedication
- Receiving God's blessing

The gospel pattern is the pattern of worship in the Bible:

Worship by Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-13)

- God's character recognized (v. 1-4)
- Human character confessed (v. 5)

- God's grace exhibited (v. 6-7)
- God's grace assured (v. 7)
- Response of thankful devotion (v. 8)
- Instruction for obedience (v. 9-12)
- Promise of covenant blessing (v. 13)

Worship at Sinai (Deuteronomy 5)

- God's character recognized (v. 4, 22-24)
- Human character confessed (v. 5, 25-27)
- God's grace exhibited (v. 2-3, 6)
- God's grace assured (v. 2-3)
- Response of thankful devotion (v. 27)
- Instruction for obedience (v. 6-21, 32-33a)
- Promise of covenant blessing (v. 33b)

Worship in the Temple (2 Chronicles 5-7)

- God's character recognized (5:1-5)
- Human character confessed (5:6-10)
- God's grace exhibited (5:11-14)
- God's grace assured (5:11-14)
- Response of thankful devotion (6:1-11)
- Petition (6:12-21)
- Instruction for obedience (6:22-42)
- Promise of covenant blessing (7:1-3)
- Communion (7:4-9)

Worship in Ephesians

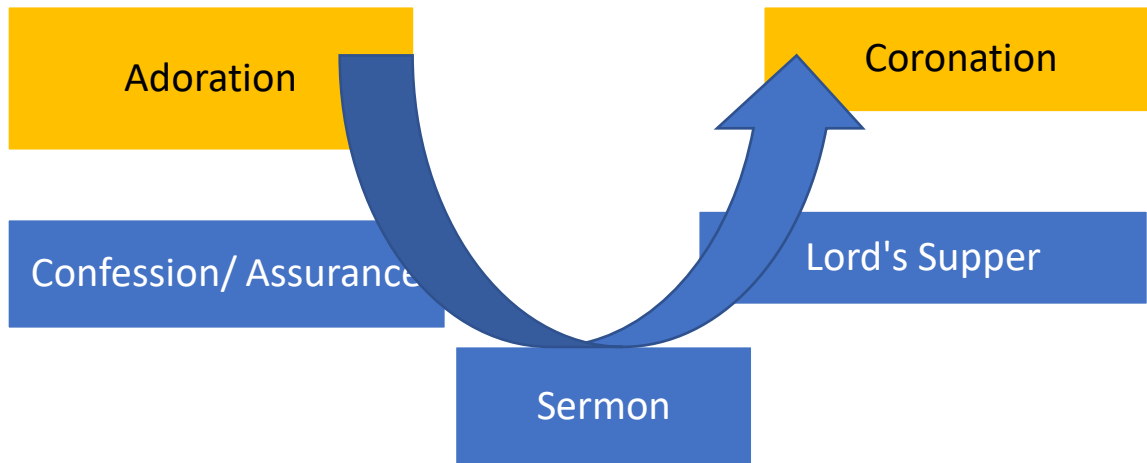
- God's character recognized (ch. 1)
- Human character confessed (2:1-3)
- God's grace exhibited (2:4-10)
- God's grace assured (2:4-10)
- Instruction for obedience (2:11-6:18)
- Promise of covenant blessing (6:23-24)

Common Liturgical Names for this Pattern

- God's character recognized (Prayer of Adoration)
- Human character confessed (Confession of sin)
- God's grace assured (Assurance of Pardon)
- Response of thankful devotion (Songs or Prayers of Thanksgiving, Eucharist)
- Instruction for obedience (Sermon)
- Promise of covenant blessing (Benediction)

***Key Observation: The Pattern demonstrates a covenantal dialogue between God and his people.**

The dialogue moves from transcendence to imminence back to transcendence (or from God to us back to God).



Connecting the Dots: Where Theology meets Life

Summary: God has called us to worship Him as our main duty in life. Worship should be given according to God's word. Because worship not just doxological, edifying and missional, worship should be in the vernacular of the people.