

Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church

Foundations Class

Week 6 – April 11, 2021, Worship and the Sabbath

Worship

I. The Standard of Worship: God's Word (Reformed Worship)

Matthew 15:8 *This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*

Moreover, the rule which distinguishes between pure and vitiated worship is of universal application, in order that we may not adopt any device which seems fit to ourselves, but look to the injunction of Him who alone is entitled to prescribe. Therefore, if we would have Him to approve our worship, this rule, which he everywhere enforces with the utmost strictness, must be carefully observed. For there is a twofold reason why the Lord, in condemning and prohibiting all fictitious worship, requires us to give obedience only to his own voice. First, it tends greatly to establish His authority that we do not follow our own pleasures but depend entirely on his sovereignty; and, secondly, such is our folly, that when we are left at liberty, all we are able to do is to go astray. And then when once we have turned aside from the right path, there is no end to our wanderings, until we get buried under a multitude of superstitions. Justly, therefore, does the Lord, in order to assert his full right of dominion, strictly enjoin what he wishes us to do, and at once reject all human devices which are at variance with his command. Justly, too, does he, in express terms, define our limits that we may not, by fabricating perverse modes of worship, provoke His anger against us...Every addition to His word, especially in this matter, is a lie

John Calvin – The Necessity of Reforming the Church

Regulative Principle *“But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped 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.” (Westminster Confession of Faith, XXI.1)*

II. The Heart of Worship: Spirit and Truth

John 4:24 *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*

Worship is an act of the understanding, applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God, and actual thoughts of his majesty...It is also an act of the will, whereby the soul adores and reverenceth his majesty, is ravished with his amiableness, embraceth his goodness, enters itself into an intimate communion with this most lovely object, and pitcheth all his affections upon him. (Steven Charnock, as quoted in J.I. Packer A Quest for Godliness)

Its chief foundation is to acknowledge Him to be, as He is, the only source of all virtue, justice, holiness, wisdom, truth, power, goodness, mercy, life, and salvation; in accordance with this, to ascribe and render to Him the glory of all that is good, to seek all things in Him alone, and in every want have recourse to Him alone. Hence arises prayer, hence praise and thanksgiving — these being attestations to the glory which we attribute to Him. This is that genuine sanctification of His name which He requires of us above all things. (John Calvin, The Necessity of Reforming the Church)

III. 3 Implications follow:

a. Is our worship characterized by God-centered reverence as well as gladness?

God is a Spirit infinitely happy, therefore we must approach him with cheerfulness; he is a Spirit of infinite majesty, therefore we must come before him with reverence; he is a Spirit infinitely high, therefore we must offer up our sacrifices with deepest humility; he is a Spirit infinitely holy, therefore we must address him with purity; he is a Spirit infinitely glorious, we therefore must acknowledge his excellency...he is a Spirit infinitely provoked by us, therefore we must offer up our worship in the name of a pacifying mediator and intercessor. (Steven Charnock, as quoted in J.I. Packer A Quest for Godliness)

b. Is there a spiritual simplicity to our worship?

c. Thus we have a forefront concern with the means of grace God has provided

God's word

Prayer

Songs, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs

Sacraments

Acts 2:42 - And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.;

The Sabbath

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. (11) For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:8-11)

I. The Sabbath as an overall Christian view of history

a. Divine Prototype

In connections with God, 'rest' cannot, of course mean mere cessation from labour, far less recovery from fatigue. Such a meaning is by no means required by the Old Testament usage of the word. 'Rest' resembles the word 'peace' in this respect, that it has in Scripture, in fact to the Shemitic mind generally, a positive rather than a negative import. It stands for consummation of a work accomplished and the joy and satisfaction attendant upon this. Such was its prototype in God. (Vos, 140)

a. Christ

The universal Sabbath law received a modified significance under the Covenant of Grace. The work which issues into the rest can now no longer be man's own work. It becomes the work of Christ....Inasmuch as the Old Covenant was still looking forward to the performance of the Messianic work, naturally the days of labour to it come first, the day of rest falls at the end of the week. We, under the New Covenant, look back upon the accomplished work of Christ. We, therefore, first celebrate the rest in principle procured by Christ, although the Sabbath also still remains a sign looking forward to the final eschatological rest. (Vos, 141)

b. Thus a Philosophy of history

Heb 4:9-11 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, (10) for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. (11) Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

The weekly cycle—which structures human existence in virtually every time and place—itself provides a kind of "philosophy of history." The pattern of six days of activity interrupted by one day of rest is a continuing reminder that human beings are not caught up in a meaningless flow of days, one after the other without end. History has a beginning and an ending. We are heading toward final judgment and the consummation of all things... (Richard B. Gaffin, A Sign of Hope)

2. How the Sabbath command practically shapes the rhythm of our weeks in terms of our work, rest and worship.

a. Rest & Worship

Isa 58:13-14 "If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; (14) then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

b. Work: Six days of work

c. What is at stake with remembering the Sabbath

Every time we neglect to consecrate the Sabbath day to God, we actually steal hope from ourselves. Every time we fail to keep the day holy to God, we actually obscure our witness to the world of hope in Christ. Every Sabbath day is a gracious reminder that our "labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58). (Richard B. Gaffin, A Sign of Hope)