

Sunday School: January 21, 2018

### **Biblical Worship**

Recall from previous lessons - Reformed worship is:

- Biblical (first and foremost)
- Historical (we come from many centuries of believing, practicing Christians)
- Covenantal (God is our God, and we are His people)
- Liturgical (has an order and pattern)
- Evangelical (gospel-centered)
- Reverential (through worship, we are dealing with the Eternal, Sovereign God)
- Joyful (brings joy to the heart)
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Last week we saw that sincerity is not enough; God is concerned with HOW He is worshipped.

Reformed churches practice the Regulative, or Prescriptive, Principle of Worship.

Most churches of the Christian world today would say that if something is not forbidden, it is permissible in worship, as long as you are sincere. *Last week, we saw that this proposition is problematic.*

Most churches in history held to the Regulative (or Prescriptive) Principle of Worship: that Scripture regulates, or prescribes, what we are to do in public worship.

Does this sound legalistic? Does this sound too narrow?

We live in an age that is increasingly Biblically illiterate; so they do what seems to make sense based on their sincerity, rather than the Word of God.

Deuteronomy 12:

V1-7: Don't do what the pagan nations are doing

Instead – do what I tell you

V8-14: Do all that I am commanding you

God will designate a place to be worshipped

Worship is not to be what/where the people want – rather, where God designates

God is serious about worship; He gives a great level of detail:

V8: Do not worship according to our desires; do not do what is right in our own eyes

V32: We are to worship as God demands; do not add to it or take away from what He commands

V2-4: Destroy the places not prescribed by God in the land.

Note: this does not mean that we are to destroy Mosques, etc. This particularly applied to the Israelite theocracy.

Within Christian worship, we are to eliminate any pagan practice that is not prescribed by God.

God prescribes the *elements* of worship.

Look at the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 21:

Paragraph 1: the Regulative Principle of Worship – God has prescribed how He wants to be worshipped, and it is limited

Paragraph 3: the Elements of New Testament Worship

Prayer

Reading Scripture

Preaching Scripture

Hearing Scripture

Music (Singing Psalms)

Sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper)

Oaths/Vows (ex: New members and weddings)

Scripture references are provided in the Westminster Confession.

Most churches are doing these things, even if they don't hold to the Regulative Principle.

However, they have introduced other things into worship: prayer is often limited, reading of Scripture is often limited; sermons are often moralistic therapeutic deism. Today, we often see worship of God blended with the worship of the gods of today: entertainment, success, relevance, tolerance.

Note Verse 28 of Deuteronomy 12: "Be careful to obey...do not add, do not take away."

What is at stake here? *The Sovereignty of God*

Next week: we will look at the elements of worship and the circumstances of worship.