

No. 14. *The Church -- Worshipping God because of Redemption*

God dwells with His people, condescending to meet with them in their corporate gatherings. Such gatherings are the will of the Lord for His Church, 1 Cor 16: 1; and are not to be forsaken, Hebrews 11: 25. Moreover, the primary reason for the assembling of the Church is the worship of the Lord. The Church does not come together in the first instance for her own benefit and blessing but in order to worship Almighty God, a fact of great importance with regard to the purity of worship.

The thinking of many is that the first reason for worship is that man will gain some benefit. The inevitable result of such thinking is that the worship service will take the course of being man-centred. The form and content of the worship service will be designed to cater for the whims & fancies of man, to please the flesh and have people feel good. In recent times this philosophy of worship has become very prevalent, with the result that churches find themselves on a constant quest to find ways of making the worship service pleasing to men. For example, churches will advertise their services as being comprised of "the traditional service" at one hour, and then "the contemporary service" at another hour.

However, when it is kept in mind that the first reason for gathering together is to worship God, then the worship service will revolve around the Lord not man; and the ingredients of worship will be according to the Scriptures so that the Lord is magnified. In other words, as was stated last week, the Lord alone is the sole object of worship in the gatherings of the Church, a principle of truth that is clearly set forth in all Scripture and is especially underlined in the Law in the first two commandments. Last week it was noted that in this 95th Psalm two main reasons are presented as to why the Lord is to be the sole object of worship, the first of them being the argument of creation, v.v. 3-6.

II. SECOND GOD ALONE IS THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP BECAUSE HE IS THE SAVIOUR

See v. 7 -- we are to worship, bow down, kneel before the Lord, "*for He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.*" From the realm of creation, the Psalmist now moves to the realm of salvation or redemption, in order to show why God alone has claims upon our worship and devotion. He addresses those who are the Lord's people already and he urges an additional reason, a deeper reason, as to why God is to be worshipped and adored on His day, in His own appointed fashion. It is a reason based entirely on the relationship of grace between the Lord and His people.

Note in this psalm some features of that relationship that we have with the God we worship.

1. It is a supernatural relationship.

Note the words "*we are...the sheep of His hand.*" Observe the emphasis on the Lord's hand with regard to believers being His sheep. The words denote that He has made us His sheep. In the physical realm, a farmer may buy sheep, breed sheep, and tend sheep but only God can make them. Thus in the spiritual realm, only the Lord is able to make us His sheep, His flock. Psalm 100: 3.

Therefore, in the sense of redemption also, He is the only Maker, for only God can make dead sinners to be His living flock. This is the new creation, Eph 2: 10, "*We are His workmanship.*" It is a work of grace and supernatural power. It is wrought through Christ -- same verse -- and is based on His atoning work as the Shepherd Who laid down His life for the sheep. You are God's creature -- but are you a new creature? Only in Christ can you truly worship God.

2. It is a secure relationship.

V. 7 -- "*we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.*"

(a) This relationship is secure because of the Lord's provision. The word pasture also means, "feeding". We are the people of His feeding; i.e., those for whom He provides spiritual food. Ezek 34: 11, 12 -- the Lord, the Shepherd, seeks out His sheep; Luke 15: 3-6. However, when He seeks them out, He feeds them; Ezek 34: 13-15. He feeds them by His Word, by the ministry of the Spirit, through His ordinances, through prayer, through the fellowship of believers: all these are essentials of true worship. To use them and not harden our hearts, Ps 95: 7b onwards.

(b) This relationship is secure because of the Lord's power. We are the sheep of His hand, John 10: 28 -- in the hand of the Redeemer. Engraved upon the palms of His hand, Isaiah 49: 15, 16. The point made is that the Lord's people have been bought by the travail of His soul. The hand that holds us was the hand that was wounded for us; therefore we know that He will not let us go. He does not count His redemptive sufferings to be a light matter, so He will preserve all those for whom He died. Hence, let us come and bow down before such a Saviour.

3. It is a special relationship.

The psalmist says, "*For He is our God.*" The language denotes that the Psalmist boasts in his God, as compared to the gods of the heathen. The point is - we have such a wonderful God: true, everlasting, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent etc. What a privilege to have such a God - thus let us adore Him today! Is He your God? Can only become such to you through Christ the Godman. He is the only Mediator; those who receive Him are given the right to be the sons of God

Notice, at this point the clear implication of this reason (salvation) as to why Almighty God is to be the sole object of worship. When dealing with the doctrine of salvation we are focusing on the fact that what God has provided for His people is in & through Christ. Therefore, our worship services should be Christ-centred, and worship services that are Christ-centred in content will be conducive to worship that glorifies God. Christ-centred worship is worship in which the person and work of Christ are the pre-eminent theme and focus in every part. Therefore, there will be an exalting of Almighty God, for He is the fountainhead of all the blessings that revolve around Christ. Christ-centred preaching is to proclaim the blessings of God's gracious covenant of grace and is, therefore, to exalt God.

When worship is Christ-centred there will be created in the hearts of God's people a spontaneous glorifying & magnifying of God, which is His due. True worship cannot be manufactured or created by human energy or strategy. Worship is the hearty response of a soul that sees what God has done in Christ for sinful men. See Luke 2: 28 -- the reference to Simeon blessing God is a reference to worship. Moreover, Simeon worships because he sees Christ. Note also v.v. 37, 38 -- Anna also engages in worship due to the redemption that is in Christ.