

The Mind, Attitude, and Heart of Worship

In the 1600's John Bunyan, was imprisoned because of his Baptist faith and while he was in prison he wrote the classical allegory, Pilgrim's Progress.

If you have read this book you will recall that the story revolves around two characters:

Christian and **Hopeful** who are on a religious pilgrimage.

At one point on the journey they discuss an earlier companion traveler who was named **Temporary**.

The traveler named **Temporary** had started the pilgrimage, but along the way he fell by the wayside, or as Bunyan worded it, he backslid.

Backslide—that is a term that John Bunyan coined to describe someone who only served God temporarily.

This word seems to reflect another interesting word the Apostle John in John 6.

And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. (Jn. 6:65-66)

Notice it says, they “withdrew.”

... They quit following Jesus ... they became temporary.

The point is that not every “saved” person is a disciple of Christ.

**A disciple is someone who imitates or emulates the lifestyle of the one they are following.
They are a visual replica of the original.**

There are some people who claim to be Christian ... but they make no effort to live the Christian

lifestyle.

... or they only follow Christ for a little while ... temporary.

... they used to live the Christian lifestyle BUT THEN THEY QUIT!

... all of us know people like this ...

- They “used” to be passionate about serving Christ.
- They “used” to go all out for Jesus.
- But today their attendance to the house of God is at best infrequent, if ever.
- They still “talk” about Jesus but they aren’t really that concerned about pleasing Him.
- Perhaps there is someone here today who has been one of those “temporary” disciples.

I would suggest to you today that the Bible (and history) is filled with people who started out well but who ended up tragically.

There is a man named “Demas” who was mentioned 3 times in the New Testament.

He was an associate of the Apostle Paul.

He is first introduced in the book of Philemon where Paul says, “*Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.*” We can see in this reference that Paul really respected Demas. (as he did Luke)

Later Paul mentions Demas in the Book of Colossians. Paul writes, “*Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas.*” Perhaps the mentioning of Luke first this time rather than Demas may suggest something has changed Paul’s opinion but we can’t be sure.

Finally in Paul’s last letter (to Timothy) he writes, “*Demas deserted me, having loved this present age.*”

Let me just throw this thought in here: **“Idolatry, in the modern church, is an act of trying to worship God through the love of the present age.”**

Demas was a man whose life that started out glorious but ended up in tragedy.

He was a “temporary” disciple. ... He was a backslider.

Backsliding begins when we lose focus on the right thing and began to focus on the wrong things.

Backslidding happens when we lose our sense of spiritual priority and begin drifting from God

... one’s worship, is diverted from God to something or someone else.

This is what the first 3 commandments are all about.

... our worship of God.

- You may not know this but faithfulness in discipleship is dependent upon worship.
- Those who become inconsistent in worship will become inconsistent disciples.
- Those who forsake worship will forsake discipleship.

What I’m trying to say is that the reason discipleship has become such a rare thing in our society is because genuine worship has become rare.

Christ redeemed us ***“In order that He might make worshipers out of rebels; in order that he might restore us again to the place of worship we knew when we were first created.”***

... since we were created to worship then worship must be the normal response of moral beings.

Listen to this quote from him:

“Worship is the missing jewel in modern evangelicalism. We’re organized; we work; we have

our agendas, we have almost everything, but there's one thing that the churches, even the gospel churches, do not have, that is the ability to worship. We are not cultivating the art of worship..... [Worship is] an attitude, a state of mind, a sustained act of the heart....."

Notice those three things: Attitude, Mind, and Heart.

Those three things hint of the first three commandments which are God's simple plan for our worship of Him.

1. Our Attitude Must Be EXCLUSIVE (Exodus 20:3)

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

The Bible is a book of confident belief.

None of the writers questioned the existence of God.

They did not wallow in the uncertainty of God's person they thrived in the absolute assurance of His existence.

... They delighted in Him.

... They assumed God's existence as certainly as they assumed their own.

Although God could prove His existence He never acknowledges the need to.

... but if He did we would not be able to understand.

The question is asked in the book of Job (11:7) "*Can you by searching find out God?*"

The Apostle Paul in Romans 11:33 says this, "*How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.*"

Rene Descartes, in his arrogance said,(in Latin) *cogito, ergo sum* "I think, therefore I am."

... **God just says**, “*I Am*” ... and that is sufficient.

Moses standing at the burning bush asked, “*who shall I say has sent me?*”

The Lord said to Moses, “*I AM WHO I AM*”; and He said, “*Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.*” (Exod. 3:14)

- Upon this statement rest the whole authority of God.
- He is the eternal everlasting God.
- He is the infinite, immutable, unchanging God.
- He is true, just, pure, righteous, holy, divine, and indisputably boundlessly God.

Therefore we must **trust** Him. ... We must have absolute **confidence** in Him

We must worship HIM

... that is what this first commandment is about ...

The first commandment tells us the **WHO** of worship.

Worship rises or falls in any church depending upon the attitude we take toward WHO God is.

... Who is God? **Creature or Creator ...** In Psalm 50:21, God rebukes the wicked man and judges him because God says, “*You thought I was altogether like you.*”

... **Holy or Unholy ...** over and over again in the Bible we read the angels and the elders in heaven crying “*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts!*”

... *God is light and in Him is no darkness!*(1 John 1:5)

... **Just or unjust ...** Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians that God, is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us

Therefore, since God is WHO He claims to be then He must be the only object of our worship.

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

This is a command that demands we reject all other gods ...

... a declaration that God is exclusively the only object of true worship.

Now I don't imagine any of us have "idols or statues" in our homes that we bow down before ...

... and because we don't actually bow down to statues ... we don't think we are idolaters.

This was the mistake that the Pharisees, in Jesus day, made.

Because they did not have images they bowed before, they felt they were being obedient to this first commandment.

They kept the letter of the law but missed the principle.

So Jesus endeavored to open their eyes to see and told them the principle behind the law.

Principle: AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' (Mk. 12:30)

What was the problem with the Pharisees ... they worshiped the **law** of God **NOT the God of the law.**

They made the commandments their god!

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

... I've seen it happen far too often where people worship the things of God more than God.

But Nathan I just love the church ... Sunday School ... worship music ... the Bible so much

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

The commandments are not the end of all things ... CHRIST is!

The Bible is not the end of all things ... JESUS is!

... and if you don't understand what I am saying you may be making the same mistake the Pharisees made 2000 years ago.

Make no mistake ... obedience is not the highest act of love ... worship is.

... worship is the ultimate act of love.

Nothing, Nothing, No one, No thing, No object, No person ... should take God's place on the throne.

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

Our attitude of worship must be that God and God alone is the exclusive object of our worship and love.

2. Our Mind Must Be FOCUSED (Exodus 20:4-6)

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exod. 20:4-6)

The first commandment tells us **WHO** we worship but the second commandment tells us **HOW**.

The first commandment forbids **worshipping false gods** but the second commandment **forbids false worship of the true God**.

God is not a **"physical" God** therefore He should **not be represented with "physical" things**.

Jesus revealed the principle behind this commandment to the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4.

If you'll remember Jesus and His disciples had been traveling when they stopped at a city in Samaria named Sychar.

Jesus was tired so he sat down at the well to wait while the disciples went into the city to find some food.

... while Jesus was there this woman came out to get some water and a conversation ensued.

In the course of their conversation it becomes apparent that she does not know the true nature of God.

- She thought that God was like a great person, or a great king ...
- She thought that if she wanted to approach God she would have to go to some designated place.

She said, *"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and the Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where we ought to worship."*

She did not understand the nature of God.

... That is why verse 22 Jesus says to her, *"You worship you do not know."*

A lot of people are like this Samaritan woman who think that god is limited to a place, a form of worship, a ritual, a man made ceremony.

In that moment Jesus, in His infinite mercy pulled back the curtain of the law's letter and taught her a lesson we all need to learn.

Jesus showed her that the standard of worship was not man made and approaching God is neither mental nor physical.

Principle: *"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (Jn. 4:23-24)*

We must not make the mistake of using material things as a platform to worship God.

It is too easy to fall into the trap of making the center of our faith something earthly and physical.

... too often we mistake the corruptible things of man for the incorruptible God.

John Knox, when he and Oliver Cromwell were freeing Britain from the tyranny of Bloody Mary they marched through land and mutilated with saber and gun the statues of all the "saints" that had been erected in the English Cathedrals.

Why? Because when we idolize Bible teachers, theological systems, and religious things they CORRUPT our understanding of God..

Let me say it this way: What God is forbidding here in this second commandment is any attempt to represent God or equate God with something or someone else.

... not the Pope, not the TV preacher, not John MacArthur ... not ANYONE or ANYTHING

"You shall not make for yourself an idol or any likeness"

The focus of our worship must God, and God alone!

To help us with this God has given us His son Jesus Christ.

His name is Emmanuel: "God with us." **Jesus is the image of the invisible God.**

What we love we worship, what we worship we adore...

True Worship is adoration of Christ!

Worship is focusing on Christ.

One of the reason there is so much confusion in the church today is because we are not focused on Christ.

The Old King James said it this way: *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: (Isa. 26:3)*

True worship stamps upon our character and countenance the image of Christ himself.

When your eyes are singular for the Lord, you can't help but being conformed unto His image.

This is why the devil is always trying to distract us with all these non-essential things ...

"You shall have no other gods before Me." –the attitude of worship is exclusive

"You shall not make for yourself an idol" –worship must be focused on Christ

3. Our Heart Must Be PURE (Exodus 20:7)

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. (Exod. 20:7)

James, the brother of Jesus said, *if you can't control your tongue, your religion is worthless.*

Gossip, telling people off, insulting people ... RELIGION WORTHLESS!

The quality of our Christianity is revealed through our speech.

Here we are commanded to not use God's name in vain ... what does that actually mean?

... this is about more than just using God's name as a swear word.

Because of the greatness of God's name any use of His name that brings dishonor on Him or His character is taking His name in vain.

Jesus Christ has been given the name above all names, at which every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:9-10)

So when we profess that we are a Christian we are taking upon ourselves the Lord's name.

... we use His name as our identity

... we pray in Jesus' name ...

So ... if we profess to be Christian, but act and speak in a worldly or profane manner, we take His name in vain.

When we say we love Him but do not love others ... we take His name in vain.

G. Campbell Morgan said, "The profanity of the church is infinitely worse than the profanity of the Street. The blasphemy of the sanctuary is a far more insidious form of evil than the blasphemy of the slum."

True worship must come from a pure heart ... and a controlled tongue indicates a pure heart.

The Pharisees were concerned about "rightness."

They were so consumed by the need to keep their language free from profanity, or taking God's name in vain that they would bathe themselves even before writing the name of God.

They even refused to write the vowels of God's name. *They would just write the consonants and place a dash at each place where a vowel was supposed to be.*

Yet without any trepidation this same crowd, accused Jesus of doing miracles by the power of the devil.

... look at what Jesus is doing ... he thinks he so special ... he only wants to take over ...

They didn't use God's name as a swear word— But, without any doubt, they were clearly guilty of disobeying the third commandment and taking God's name in vain.

This is what Jesus said.

Principle: *"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵ "The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. (Matt. 12:34-35)*

It is impossible to truly worship unless our heart is firmly and fully settled on the glory of God!

If we deal with the things of God without proper reverence for holiness of God's name, then we are guilty of VAIN WORSHIP!

Hear Me Today! Our worship of God MUST BE built upon the foundation of a pure and thirsty heart!

... and yet we continue to defend our unbridled tongues

... we continue to protect our right to be angry and disagreeable

... When we should encourage one another we instead discourage, accuse, and tear down ...

OH MY DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER ... DON'T YOU WANT MORE FROM GOD?

Oh to be captivated, charmed and overwhelmed by the splendor and majesty of the Almighty God.

To worship our matchless Savior with fear, wonder, desire and awe.

To love God to the point where our intimacy with God is both painful and delightful.

To dwell in the undiluted presence of God and find ourselves in breathless silent holy awe!

Isn't that what we desire? Isn't this the ultimate hope of all of our worship!

³ Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? ⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully. ⁵ He shall receive a blessing from the LORD And righteousness from the God of his salvation. (Ps. 24:3-5)