

Reverence

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1 Timothy 1:17

Introduction

As we discussed in my sermon on Heresy, the modern trend of church shopping the same way that we go shopping for a coat or a hotel has given birth to many unfortunate offspring. Today I would like to consider who it is that we have come to worship this morning and how it is that He would have us worship Him.

The Church's emphasis should be a declaration of who God is and what we have been taught by His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. It seems that the desire to attract more consumers to our churches has left us with the false notion that we must "soften" the attributes of God and downplay sin so that He might come across as more appealing to the unchurched. Obviously, this misses the point in that the Gospel is not about making God satisfactory to sinners, rather it is about God making sinners satisfactory to Himself. Thus even the church growth models threaten to undermine the Gospel itself.

The corporate and private worship of God is not at all about what we like or prefer. It has nothing to do with how we feel about various aspects of our corporate worship. Instead, it is our belief that a reconciled relationship with God and proper understanding of who He is (as far as He has revealed Himself) will bring us to proper attitudes toward our worship of Him. If we are demonstrating our love and honor for Him in a manner which pleases Him, then this (and only this) is what should please us.

Eternal, Immortal, Invisible & Alone Wise

- Our God has forever existed and will rule over His creation forevermore. We, His creation, are infinitely unlike Him in that He is the beginning and end of all things and He holds all things together. It is not in His nature to die as He is existence itself as His name implies. It was necessary for Him to condescend to becoming a man in order that He might die. God is a Spirit and there is no image we can create that can contain Him or depict His being without it being an abomination to Him. All wisdom and truth is contained in Him and He works all things according to the wonderful counsel of His own will. Because of these attributes He is worthy to be praised forever—not just during our lifetime but forever.

Yes, Fear Means Fear

²⁸ *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*²⁹ *For our God is a consuming fire.* Hebrews 12:28-29

- Notice here that the word reverence is very closely associated with Godly fear. Usually when verses like this are read there comes a disclaimer that surely this verse doesn't mean we actually *fear* Him. Yes it does. Not the kind of fear where we believe that He will punish those whom He has saved through His Son. Nor is it the kind of fear we might have if He was temperamental or capricious. No, this kind of fear results from the awe and majesty of who He is.
- As with virtually any issue, there are two ditches on this road. There are those who have become so comfortable with whom they perceive God to be that they completely ignore Him. And, in the other ditch, we have those who are so consumed with fear that they never approach Him. But the Bible teaches that we both delight in Him and we fear Him because He is majestic and transcends all things. For example: "Our *Father* who art in heaven, *hallowed* by thy name..."

We Approach Him with Boldness

¹⁶ *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Hebrews 4:16

- Notice the amazing blessing of this verse—the one coming before the throne is one who needs mercy. He does not come in his own glory yet offering tribute. No, this one is coming because he has sinned and is in need of mercy. Yet how is it that he is allowed to come in boldness? Because he comes in the glory and righteousness of another—the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Work Within Us Is Worked Out in Fear

¹² *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*¹³ *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.* Phil. 2:12-13

- Why fear and trembling? Because the creator of the universe is at work in you *personally* to manifest the fruit that pleases Him. You are working out that which He works in and if He were to not work in you, there would be nothing for you to work out.

- “ The carnal mind cannot do this. The natural man cannot delight in something he fears nor can he fear something that he deeply delights in. This is not some attitude that you are called to muster up. You do not produce this fear and reverence in yourself. Rather, this reverence comes through faith as we come to understand who He is and what He is doing.

Reverence in Our Corporate Worship

Psalm 89:1-18

- “ In our modern evangelical world, we know enough not to say that we should be irreverent. Although in some cases the world sees irreverence as a virtue, we in the church, know not to use such descriptions. However, we will rail against the formalness of worship claiming that it inhibits our spirits and stifles genuine worship which emanates extemporaneously. Again in the other ditch, we may say that formality in worship is so central that there is no room for us to enjoy worshipping our Lord.
- “ Notice the tone of the Psalm. This psalmist teaches us the beauty and majesty of the One who made covenant with David, who is faithful in all generations and whose glory transcends all things. But notice also in verse seven that it is the assembly of saints worshipping where reverence and fear are to be found.

1 Timothy 3:14

- “ Paul is teaching Timothy on how the Saints should conduct themselves in the assembly of believers. This assembly is called the church of the Living God. As His great promise to us, “I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” which was later reconfirmed in Jeremiah 31 and fulfilled in Revelation 21, God dwells among His people through His Holy Spirit. He is not simply in heaven where He is remote and detached from what goes on down here, He is in our midst and works in us in mighty ways as we gather together.

Specific Applications for Our Church

- “ Naturally, the things we have discussed we can defend directly from the Scriptures. However these things come from perceptions from our leadership. This is not inspired or prophetic but hopefully practical.
- “ First, we do not believe that we can gather together for worship outside of understanding. Certainly there are some aspects of worship that are beyond us as they are the things that God works through us. But, in order for our corporate worship to be maturing, we must be reading our Bibles. We must have our thoughts and vocabularies shaped by the Scriptures so that we are thinking and acting appropriately. As we traffic in God’s word our minds are renewed and His words are on our lips. This will greatly improve both our familial and corporate worship
- “ Parents teach your children that this is a classroom and yet more than a classroom. They should be prepared for church just as they would be for school. This preparation includes the attitudes of their hearts as well as being brought to the place of maturity where they can receive instruction. This decision is up to you parents. You consider the frame of your child but work within that frame to help bring them to maturity in their attitudes of worship and preparing to hear the Word of God proclaimed.
- “ The women have lead the way in hospitality by caring in many ways for the needs of others. This is an integral part of our life as a body of believers. As the saints come together, the fact that they are worshipping in unity and love for one another causes God’s name to be honored and not blasphemed. The men need to see to it that they are seeking ways to minister to other families and demonstrate love. As Paul said to the Thessalonians, do so more and more (1 Thess 4:9-12).

Questions for Younger Saints

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1) What do the following words mean?

God is Eternal

God is Immortal

God is Invisible

God Alone is Wise

2) Does God love us? Does He care for us? Does He give us good things? Why then does the Bible say we should fear Him?

3) Write down three things that you do to get ready for coming to church. Why do you do those things?

1)

2)

3)