

“Worship God’s Way”
Exodus 20:22-26
(Preached at Trinity, March 9, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we saw last time, God is speaking forth from heaven.
Exodus 20:22 – “And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.”
2. This speaks volumes concerning this authority of from on high
 - A. First, it reiterates for us the authority of the Law.
These are commands, not suggestions. They are not options. Obedience is not left up to our discretion.
 - B. Second, it reiterates the authority of Scripture.
 1. God’s Word is absolute. He has spoken!
 2. God has the power and authority to speak and accomplish His Word.
 - C. Third, it points to our ultimate authority.
 1. Jesus as our Great Prophet is God’s ultimate revelation of Himself.
 2. The church was founded upon the apostles and their doctrine but the apostles were appointed by Christ to act for Him in His name. The Apostles wrote most of the NT but its authority does not rest upon the apostles but upon Christ.
 3. How does Christ speak to us today? He speaks to us through His inspired Word. The authority of Christ and the authority of the Bible are inseparable.
3. As we continue to the end of this chapter and for the next three chapters Moses will continue recording God’s words from heaven.
Exodus 24:3-4 – “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. ⁴ And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD”
4. In the final part of **Chapter 20** it would appear that God is simply repeating the first two Commandments. He says in **Verse 23**
Exodus 20:23 – “Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.”
5. It would be easy to just skip over it as just a restatement of what we have already dealt with. But it is much more! First, if God restates it He is telling us that it is very important. He knows how easily we excuse ourselves. And He knows how prone we are to idolatry. God doesn’t just repeat it here. He repeats it over and over in Scripture – in both the OT and NT
Isaiah 42:8 – “I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”
1 John 5:21 – “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

6. This isn't just a sin that threatened Israel. It threatens us particularly. The NT declares it to be in the class of sin stated to be so contrary to Christianity that those who indulge in it shall be excluded from our Lord's kingdom.

Galatians 5:19-20 – “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, . . . that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Ephesians 5:5 – “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

1 Corinthians 6:9 – “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,”

Revelation 21:8 – “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Revelation 22:14-15 – “Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

7. Idolatry, of course, can take many different forms.

- A. An idol is basically anything that draws our attention away from God. Anything that captures our emotions so that we focus more upon the object than upon God.
- B. In terms of this passage, however, the focus is more upon worship.
 1. **Verse 23** speaks of gods of silver and gold.
 2. **Verses 24-26** speak of altars and sacrifices
 3. The focus here is clearly upon worship

8. Tonight I want to set this passage before you as it applies to worship. The implications are important. God has not left us in the dark. His worship is the most important thing we do. It is the one thing we do on earth that will continue into eternity. God gives us clear instructions concerning His worship.

- I. God's worship must be submissive

- A. We must approach God with a mind to obey
 1. As we saw last week, God is speaking with absolute authority
Exodus 20:22 – “I have talked with you from heaven.”
 2. The very nature of worship is submission.
The Hebrew word for worship is שָׁחָה *shachah* – it means to bow down or to prostrate yourself. It describes one coming in complete submission to God.
- B. Submission must dictate how we approach God in worship
 1. One of the greatest errors being perpetuated today is that we have freedom to do anything that is not expressly forbidden.
 2. God is establishing a principle in these passages that He orders how He will be worshipped
God doesn't allow us to use our imaginations in how we order our worship

3. Scripture is filled with examples of people who were judged of God because they presumed upon themselves to worship according to their own faculties of reason
 - a. King Saul decided to offer up a sacrifice because he thought Samuel would not arrive in time? The issue was not whether Samuel would arrive in time to make the offering – the issue was that King Saul was not qualified to make the sacrifice. When Samuel arrived he said to Saul,
1 Samuel 15:22 – “Hath the LORD as *great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.”
 - b. Nadab and Abihu were killed by God because they presumed to offer that which God had not commanded.
Leviticus 10:1-2 – “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. ² And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”
4. The nature of the Regulative Principle is that while the silence of Scripture must be respected silence does not authorize. In worship the issue for us should not be whether or not Scripture forbids an action but whether or not Scripture authorizes an action.
5. If worship demands submission then it must begin with our willingness to submit our wills to God in how we conduct our worship
6. In this passage God is giving some clear orders concerning His worship – He is sovereign over how He will be approached
 We come as His lowly subjects and bow in total subjection. This is the aspect of worship most neglected today. For more and more today man is the focus - having our needs met. Man is being uplifted instead of God.
- C. Submission must also dictate how we direct our lives towards God
 1. When we approach God in worship we must come prepared to devote our entire life to Him – “Oh God, have Thy way with me.”
 2. This is why preaching takes such a prominent place in worship. God’s Word is being applied to us with authority.
Exodus 20:22 – “Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.”
 3. This is why worship demands preparation
 - a. You cannot give God 2-3 hours each week and expect that to be worship – worship demands your life.
 - b. If your life is surrounded by things that feeds and nurtures your flesh how can you expect to embrace that which is spiritual?
 - c. If your life is filled with things that captivate your affections how can you expect our affections to be filled with Christ?
 A.W. Tozer - "If you do not worship God seven days a week, you do not worship Him one day a week."

4. While the Hebrew word for worship implies absolute submission, the Greek word implies absolute devotion - προσκυνέω – it is a derivative of the word for dog. Literally, it means to kiss like a dog licking the hand of its master.
 - a. Have you ever noticed the devotion of a dog for its master. When his master comes home he is absolutely enraptured.
 - b. Our life must be absolutely filled with Christ

II. God's worship must be simple

- A. While it would seem that this is simply a restatement of the Second Commandment there is actually a difference in focus
 1. In the 2nd Commandment the focus was upon what the idols represented. **Exodus 20:4** – “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth.”
 - a. In other words the idols were made in the form of things in the heavens and on the earth and in the sea.
 - b. We can see the same thing in **Romans 1**
Romans 1:22-23 – “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”
 2. Here, however, the emphasis is upon what they were made of – **Exodus 20:23** – “Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.”
 - a. In other words, the warning is against the things that draw our attention, the things we consider valuable.
 - b. Remember, the focus here is upon worship. God is warning us against those things that sparkle, those things that appeal to our carnal flesh. Even those things we consider most valuable and most excellent can defile worship.
 3. This passage is one of the clearest testimonies to God's sovereignty in worship. God states clearly in His Word how he is to be worshipped and NOTHING is to be added to it.
- B. God is stating that true worship has full attention upon Him – nothing is to distract
 1. This is why God's worship is simple without outward elements that appeal to human lusts
 2. God outlaws images of silver or gold
Notice also God outlaws works of the human imagination or craftiness
Exodus 20:25 – “And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.”
 3. Later, God would ordain a much more elaborate worship with silver and gold because it was designed to point to Christ, the King of kings.

4. But true worship is simple. It seems today there seems to be no end to the craftiness of men in the ordering of worship. God is not impressed with our ability to invent new ways to worship. He is pleased with our obedience.

1 Samuel 15:22 – “Hath the LORD as *great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.”

III. God’s worship must be separate

- A. God is doing something else in this passage
 1. He is forbidding His people from worshipping Him according to their wisdom, imagination, and carnal reasoning.
 2. But God is also declaring that His worship must be distinct and separate
- B. The pagans were guilty of the very things God is condemning here
 1. They used idols of silver and gold in their worship
 2. They constructed elaborate altars of shaped and carved stones
 3. Their altars were often high with many steps rising to the top – imagine the Egyptian pyramids
 4. Their worship was often sensual in nature and often including disrobing to expose their nakedness
 5. Israel was not allowed to worship like the Canaanites.
God does not give us permission to pattern our worship according to our surrounding culture.
- C. True worship is separate from all other worship
 1. God doesn’t allow the use of external elements as if they are able to enhance the worship of God
 2. God expects His people to worship in purity
 - a. Notice the attention God’s priests were to give to purity
Exodus 20:26 – “Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.”
 - b. God would require to priests to wear undergarments
Exodus 28:42 – “And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach:”
- D. God demands that we be separate and distinct – He demands that His worship be separate and distinct
 1. How terrible it is today that so many worldly elements are being brought into the church in the name of worship.
 2. Music seems to be that which drives worship today and the emphasis is more and more upon the style rather than the words.
 - a. Music is most often equated with entertainment. In other words music is judged on the basis whether or not we enjoy it. This is judged on the basis of how it makes us feel. We often treat worship music the same way – does it create feelings of pleasure?

- b. Christian worship must place the greater emphasis upon the words
John Calvin – “We must beware lest our ears be more intent on the music than our minds on the spiritual meaning of the words. . . songs composed merely to tickle and delight the ear are unbecoming the majesty of the Church, and cannot but be most displeasing to God.”
- 3. I’m not saying that the music is irrelevant. I’m saying that the words are essential.
 - a. Listen to the Scriptural emphasis.
Colossians 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
 - b. Worship music must be examined on this Biblical basis.
Does it cause the Word of God to dwell in us richly?
Does it teach and admonish us?
Do we sing it with gratitude in our hearts to God?

Conclusion:

1. God demands that His worship be submissive as we bow before Him in devoting our entire life before Him.
2. God demands that His worship be simple. As soon as we try to improve upon it with our skills and devices we pollute and defile it.
3. God demands that His worship be separate. We must never seek to incorporate the ways of this world in the worship of God.