

## Week Nineteen, March 23, 2022: Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

WCF 21:1: *The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might.(a) But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.(b)*

(a)Rom. 1:20; Acts 17:24; Ps. 119:68; Jer. 10:7; Ps. 31:23; Ps. 18:3; Rom. 10:12; Ps. 62:8; Josh. 24:14; Mark 12:33. (b)Deut. 12:32; Matt. 15:9; Acts 17:25; Matt. 4:9-10; Deut. 4:15-20; Exod. 20:4-6; Col. 2:23.

What is worship? "... response to God in the context of his covenant."<sup>371</sup> Why do we worship? "... the existence, lordship, sovereignty, and goodness of God"<sup>372</sup> as Creator and Redeemer.

**a.** The light of nature leads us to know we should worship God. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." Blaise Pascal said, "There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus." But such leads to false religion outside Divine Revelation where God gives His directions.

**b.** Worship of God must be done in the way He expressly said He wants to be worshipped in the Bible, not according to men's "imagination and devices". This is the Regulative Principle of Worship.<sup>373</sup> Notice that the first four Commandments all essentially express this principle. See Leviticus 10:1-7 to review what happened when priests offered unprescribed fire to God in worship. **Worship is for God, not us.** We honor God by the way He desires. For instance, I want lemon cake with lemon icing on my birthday. My wife and children want to honor me on my birthday, so they do not make chocolate cake with colored sprinkles, nor do they include "unprescribed coconut" in the lemon cake batter. The Lord's Day is the Lord's Day, so we offer what He wants in worship. Keep in mind what WCF 1:6 notes as the difference between worship circumstances (light bulbs, mics, location) with elements (Bible reading and preaching, the Sacraments, prayer, singing Psalms).

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<sup>371</sup> Ward, 132.

<sup>372</sup> Spear, *FOF*, 110.

<sup>373</sup> "A divine warrant is necessary for every element of doctrine, government and worship in the church ; that is, whatsoever in these spheres is not commanded in the Scriptures, either expressly or by good and necessary consequence from their statements, *is forbidden*." John Lafayette Girardeau, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of The Church* (Crown Rights Book Company: Dahlonoga, Ga., 2005), 9. As we consider what the Puritans developed in the Standards for church worship in the British Isles, it is important to understand what pastors and their people suffered for in such a commitment earlier: "If any minister, parson, or vicar refused to follow the worship practices outlined in the Act of Uniformity [enacted by Queen Elizabeth I] and [Book of Common Prayer], then he would forfeit promotion for an entire year if convicted. For a second offense, the minister would be imprisoned for one whole year and be deprived of all promotions. For a third offense, the minister was required to surrender all promotions and suffer life imprisonment. Ministers were not the only ones liable to criminal penalty ... Like their ministerial counterparts, if anyone spoke against the BCP in any manner ..., he was liable to a fine of 100 marks. For a second offense there was a fine of 400 marks, and a third offense required the confiscation of all the person's 'goods and chattels,' and life in prison. In the sixteenth century 100 marks was worth approximately £50, which in that day was a hefty fine since a household servant would ordinarily make only £2-5 per year." Fesko, 337.

c. Why do we sing psalms acapella? First, note that paragraph 5 only speaks of singing “psalms”, and the Church has done this for almost her entire history. The Old Testament ceremonial laws have been fulfilled in Christ, and so things like incense, sacrifices, priestly vestments, and instruments that were all part of the typological sacrificial system are done away. Yet we sing Psalms still, because that is the hymnal God gave us in the Bible to sing to Him, and they are full of Christ (Ps. 2, 16, 22, 40, 45, 110 especially). We sing the things that speak of the OT sacrificial system (such as instruments) now with the view that they have been fulfilled in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit (which the instruments typified). Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 say to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but this in the Jewish mind was periphrastically saying to sing the Psalter, each of those words being titles of Psalm sections found in the OT Psalter: “it will be observed that the Confession does not acknowledge the legitimacy of the use of modern hymns in the worship of God [see section 5 below], but rather only the psalms of the Old Testament.”<sup>374</sup> Paul never had “Amazing Grace” or “Open The Eyes of My Heart” in mind, nor a pipe organ or a praise team. We must not be guilty of anachronism in our understanding of Biblical worship. And we should desire to sing only God-inspired (spiritual) songs of worship. The Psalms are the most quoted OT references in the NT. Calvin produced the Geneva Psalter. The first book printed in America was the Bay Psalter in 1640. The Westminster Assembly produced a metrical Psalter only with the 150 Psalms, and it was later revised in Scotland and became the Scottish Psalter of 1650<sup>375</sup>; our Comprehensive Psalter is that Psalter with various new tunes. Van Dixhoorn recognizes that, “The assembly’s commitment to the Psalter in worship is amply evidenced in the enormous amount of time that its members invested in revising and proof-reading a new edition of the Psalter. The assembly’s Psalter included no hymns,

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<sup>374</sup> Williamson, 167. Dickson, 152: “... the singing of psalms was commanded under the Old Testament, and that not as a type of any substance to come, nor for any ceremonial cause. Neither is it abrogated under the New Testament, but confirmed (*Psa.* 30:4; 149:1). Also, he writes, “... From [the Psalms] being a part of Scripture, appointed for his praise, whether it agree with our case or not. That being the end wherefore it was designed to be sung, is a sufficient warrant for our joining in the singing thereof.” Ibid, 153.

<sup>375</sup> Spear, *FOF*, 113.

and its Directory for Public Worship commended psalm singing.<sup>376</sup> Also, “making melody” in our hearts in Eph. 5:19 is literally in the Greek, “to pluck or twang”. The instruments of the joy of the Holy Ghost are now on our hearts, which the Old Testament instruments represented.<sup>377</sup> See how the use of priestly instruments stop after the sacrifice is completed in 2 Chronicles 29:20-30. See also the enclosed article by JG Vos quoting John Calvin on the use of instruments in OT worship as no longer to be done in NT Worship. Charles Spurgeon agreed. It was the Roman Catholic Church that began the use of instruments in worship in the late 600s A.D. We should learn music and practice to sing our best. But gorgeous singing not done God’s way is not accepted, however impressive it is to men (the opposite is true). Keep in mind that the Reformers were fond of playing instruments elsewhere for entertainment. Notice also that we are not allowed to use visible representations of Jesus in worship. The Confession here guides us to focus on what is called “Purity of Worship”.

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<sup>376</sup> Van Dixhoorn, 285. Yet he goes on to say that the words “psalms” and “hymns” were used synonymously contemporaneously, and thus intimates that the Standards do not teach exclusive psalmody. Fesko agrees with similar arguments, also pointing to the assembly’s *Annotations* commentary on Ephesians 5:19. However, he (along with Van Dixhoorn) seem to ignore that when Jesus “sung an hymn” with the disciples in Mt. 26:30, virtually all agree this was one of the Psalms in the second portion of the Hallel (115- 118); thus, the Divines’ use of the words psalm and hymn interchangeably does not prove they did not have the Psalms of David only in mind in this section of the Confession and the Directory for Public Worship. Notice, for instance, the way Augustine uses both words interchangeably as both referring to the Psalms of David: “O my God, how I cried to You when I read the psalms of David, those songs of praise and hymns of devotion that leave no room for a swelling pride ... Oh, what cries I used to send up to You through those Psalms. I was set on fire for You through those Psalms ... I freely wept when I read Your Psalms and hymns ...”, Augustine of Hippo, *Augustine’s Confessions* (Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1971), 77, 79. Considering also that while the earlier Genevan and Dutch psalters included other Scriptural “hymns” outside the Psalter and while the later Westminster Standards do not, surely the Divines implicitly ruled out all other “hymns”, especially man-made ones, and Fesko wrongly avers that the Westminster Standards are inclusive of other than the Psalms of David by virtue of “silence”; Fesko, 358-361. For a comprehensive and conclusive historical argument that the Westminster Assembly very clearly only sanctioned the Psalms of David to be sung in public worship, see, Matthew Winzer’s, “Westminster and Worship Examined: A Review of Nick Needham’s essay on the Westminster Confession of Faith’s teaching concerning the regulative principle, the singing of psalms, and the use of musical instruments in the public worship of God.”, in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 4 (2008) : 253-266, in which he concludes: “The evidence is now complete. First, the Church of Scotland practiced exclusive psalm-singing. Secondly, the Westminster Assembly labored to bring the Church of England into uniformity with Scotland’s practice by making provision for singing from the Old Testament book of Psalms. Thirdly, contemporary critics of the Assembly chided the Directory for Public Worship for excluding man-made hymns and restricting the matter of worship-song to the Psalms of David. Finally, individual members of the Westminster Assembly espoused the exclusive use of the Psalms of David” (264). His Puritan quotes at the end of the article also prove that Fesko misrepresents the understanding of the likes of Matthew Poole and Thomas Manton regarding Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19 in relation to prescribed public worship, per what he writes on page 360. Winzer’s article is available free online in pdf form at [www.cpjournal.com](http://www.cpjournal.com). See also Dr. Richard Bacon’s critique of Dr. Gary Crampton’s *Trinity Review* article, “Exclusive Psalmody”, which he wrote against exclusive psalmody by opening with the assertion that the Westminster Divines did not intend exclusive psalmody by “singing of psalms”: Richard Bacon, “Review of Exclusive Psalmody” (Rowlett, Texas: First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, 1996), at [http://www.fpcr.org/blue\\_banner\\_articles/crampton.htm](http://www.fpcr.org/blue_banner_articles/crampton.htm) [the article sadly can no longer be found online but is still worth noting here should it later again be available].

<sup>377</sup> “... the instrumental music of the temple-worship was typical of the joy and triumph of God’s believing people to result from the plentiful effusion of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament times ... it pleased God to typify the spiritual joy to spring from a richer possession of the Holy Spirit through the sensuous rapture engendered by the passionate melody of stringed instruments and the clash of cymbals, by the blare of trumpets and the ringing of harps.” Girardeau, 60-61.

WCF 21:2: *Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to Him alone;(c) not to angels, saints, or any other creature:(d) and since the fall, not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.(e)*  
(c)Matt. 4:10 with John 5:23 and 2 Cor. 13:14. (d)Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; Rom. 1:25. (e)John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Eph. 2:18; Col. 3:17.

Praying to saints shows an innate sense of needing a mediator, but only Jesus Christ is that Mediator between God and men. Not only may we not pray to saints: “The invocation of the saints is a pure absurdity, for unless they are omnipresent and omniscient, they cannot hear us; and in many cases, unless they are omnipotent, they cannot help us.”<sup>378</sup> Rowland Ward explains how the Roman Catholic Church tries to justify venerating the “saints” by making arbitrary distinctions of “latreia” (worship to God alone), “hyperdulia” (worship to the Virgin Mary), and “dulia” (worship due to the saints and martyrs). “However, worship of the saints involves belief that they are not just holy examples for our faith but actual agents with a religious role of interceding powerfully for us and aiding us through their merits, and so is not merely a weakness of the simple but is highly offensive to the character of Christ as the only mediator.”<sup>379</sup>

WCF 21:3: *Prayer, with thanksgiving, being one special part of religious worship(f) is by God required of all men:(g) and that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, (h) by the help of His Spirit,(i) according to His will,(k) with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance;(l) and, if vocal, in a known tongue.(m)*  
(f)Phil. 4:6. (g)Ps. 65:2. (h)John 14:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:5. (i)Rom. 8:26. (k)1 John 5:14. (l)Ps. 47:7; Eccl. 5:1-2; Heb. 12:28; Gen. 18:27; James 5:16; James 1:6-7; Mark 11:24; Matt 6:12,14-15; Col. 4:2; Eph. 6:18. (m)1 Cor. 14:14.

Prayer is talking to God. It is “human language that is addressed to God.”<sup>380</sup> Prayer is “fellowship with himself.”<sup>381</sup> Prayer includes adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession.<sup>382</sup> Prayer is to be private and public and without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17). Prayer is how you do not faint in this world (Luke 18:1). Why pray “In Jesus’ Name”? “Prayer in Christ’s name ... is much more than habitually ending our prayers with some mention of Him. It means responding in our whole being to the truth that comes to fullness of revelation in Him, participating in the new life that comes from Him, and submitting to His authority and teaching”<sup>383</sup> (See also WLC 180). Prayer is by the Spirit for He is the One sent by Christ to speak to our spirits that we are the sons of God, and to pray for us when we don’t know what to say (Rom. 8). Packer notes, “The mysterious reality

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<sup>378</sup> Hodge, 274. Dickson, 145, 146: “... the dead are either happy, and so they need not our prayers (Rev. 14:13). Or they are damned, and so our prayers cannot profit them. For out of hell there is no redemption (Luke 16:26) ... we are altogether ignorant of the state and condition of the dead; and therefore we cannot pray for them ...”

<sup>379</sup> Ward, 129.

<sup>380</sup> Spear, *Talking to God: the Theology of Prayer* (Crown and Covenant Publications: Pittsburgh, 2002), 14.

<sup>381</sup> Packer, 187.

<sup>382</sup> Hodge, 275.

<sup>383</sup> Spear, *Ibid*, 49.

of the Holy Spirit's help in prayer becomes known only to those who actually pray."<sup>384</sup> If public, prayer is to be in a known tongue: 1) tongues have ceased after the Apostolic dispensation, and 2) it must not be forced to be in Latin as has long been the case of the Roman Catholic Church and thus not to be understood by the people.<sup>385</sup> Let it encourage you to remember that God hears your prayers (Ps. 65:2) and He uses them as means to His ends (James 1:6; Rev. 8:1-6). Also, notice that Jesus gave you a model to follow in the Lord's Prayer. When you struggle to pray, do not hesitate to pray the Lord's Prayer verbatim, for it "may also be used as a prayer" (WLC 187). Prayer also is to be according to God's Word and reverent in the manner in how we address God (don't be casual and careless) and using the majestic names and qualities that He has revealed about Himself (so we must be careful to never use euphemisms such as "Holy cow" or "Oh, my goodness", according to WLC 112-113). "We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God ..." (WLC 185). For extended teaching on prayer, see WLC 178-196 (and our sermon series through it in the WLC series on our Sermon Audio page) and WSC 98-107, both which include teaching through the Lord's Prayer; Thomas Watson's *The Lord's Prayer*, available in our library; and The Westminster Directories for Publick and Family Worship which contain instructions on prayer.

WCF 21:4: *Prayer is to be made for things lawful, (n) and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter: (o) but not for the dead, (p) nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death. (q)*  
 (n)1 John 5:14. (o)1 Tim. 2:1-2; John 17:20; 2 Sam. 7:29; Ruth 4:12; (p)2 Sam. 12:21-23 with Luke 16:25-26; Rev. 14:13. (q)1 John 5:16.

Prayer must be according to God's Word: "Thy will be done". Pray only for the living (against R.C.C.), and do not pray for apostates (1 John 5:16). Pray for holiness (Lk. 11:13; 1 Th. 4:3).

WCF 21:5: *The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; (r) the sound preachings and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; (t) singing of psalms with grace in the heart; (u) as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: (w) beside religious oaths, (x) vows, (y) solemn fastings, (z) and thanksgivings, upon special occasions, (a) which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in a holy and religious manner. (b)*  
 (r)Acts 15:21; Rev. 1:3. (s)2 Tim. 4:2. (t)James 1:22; Acts 10:33; Matt. 13:19; Heb. 4:2; Isa. 66:2. (u)Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; James 5:13. (w)Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-29; Acts 2:42. (x)Deut. 6:13 with Neh. 10:29. (y)Isa. 19:21 with Eccl. 5:4-5. (z)Joel 2:12; Esth. 4:16; Matt. 9:15; 1 Cor. 7:5. (a)Ps. 107; Esth. 9:22. (b)Heb. 12:28.

*Ordinary worship elements.* The main elements of worship: preaching of the Word, singing of psalms, and proper use of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Prayer also is understood to be a main element per section 4 above. These ordinary elements are said in WLC 154 and WSC 88 to be ways Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption, often referred to as "means of grace". Do you want to experience more grace? Attend to its means in corporate worship.<sup>386</sup> As well, notice your worship should be "with godly fear", "conscionable hearing",

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<sup>384</sup> Packer, 189.

<sup>385</sup> Sproul points out that this is what the Divines are dealing with here, vol. 2, 323.

<sup>386</sup> "Characteristically, we make casual use of the means of grace, and we wonder why we backslide or fall into the traps of Satan." Sproul, vol. 2, 213.

“reverence”, “with grace in the heart”, and the “worthy receiving of the sacraments”. You are to give complete, holy, whole-hearted attentiveness to God in worship, for “... inattention is an insult.”<sup>387</sup> Thus heed Richard Baxter’s instructions to worshippers in the pews: “You have work to do as well as the preaching, and should all the time be as busy as he.”<sup>388</sup> R.C. Sproul challenges us: “Reverence. This may be the most difficult. We are among the most casual and disrespectful people who have inhabited the earth. That disrespect carries over even into our worship and prayer life. We tend to approach God as if he were our peer. We talk to him as if we were talking to our next-door neighbor, with no sense of awe, adoration, or reverence before him.”<sup>389</sup> See the WLC 116-121, 160 on proper preparation for and participation in the Lord’s Day Sabbath worship (more on this below). Tithing and discipline also are elements of regular worship as its “ministry and maintenance” (WLC 108); read the two attachments on tithing by R.C. Sproul and J.J. Lim. See also the Assembly’s Directory for Publick Worship within your collected Westminster Standards for more on worship. *Occasional worship elements*. There are times for corporate and individual oaths, vows (often seen as “covenanting”), fastings, and thanksgiving (see the “Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God” for instructions on fasting and thanksgiving services — note there are no instructions for liturgical calendar “holy days”). Vows and oaths are important in membership (see next chapter).

WCF 21:6: *Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now under the gospel either tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed:(c) but God is to be worshipped everywhere,(d) in spirit and truth;(e) as in private families(f) daily,(g) and in secret each one by himself;(h) so, more solemnly, in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or wilfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by His Word or providence, calleth thereunto.(i)*

(c)John 4:21. (d)Mal. 1:11; 1 Tim. 2:8. (e)John 4:23-24. (f)Jer. 10:25; Deut. 6:6-7; Job 1:5; 2 Sam. 6:18, 20; 1 Pet. 3:7; Acts 10:2. (h)Matt. 6:11. (h)Matt. 6:6; Eph. 6:18. (i)Isa. 56:6, 7; Heb. 10:25; Prov. 1:20, 21, 24; Prov. 8:34; Acts 13:42; Luke 4:16; Acts 2:42.

We are now the spiritual temple, and Jesus our High Priest takes us into the true Holy of Holies in God’s presence in heaven before the holy angels. “God is to be worshipped everywhere”. And that in 1) “private families daily” (which is why we so emphasize Family Worship: see also in your WCF the “Directory for Family Worship”); 2) in secret – private devotions; and 3) “more solemnly” in the “public assemblies”. Please soberly heed the following clause of the Confession here regarding public assemblies: “which are not carelessly or willfully to be neglected or forsaken, when God, by His Word or providence, calleth thereunto” (see Heb. 10:25). This clause is in the top right of our bulletin under the evening service note. You as members of Christ’s church are expected to assemble when the elders call you to worship God together on the Christian Sabbath. We have morning and evening worship services on the Lord’s Day, for the “whole day” is to be given to worship (Ps. 92:2, “The Psalm for the Sabbath” references morning and evening sacrifices). You have a responsibility to use your six days like mature men and women so as not to jeopardize your ability to attend Sabbath worship morning and evening. As well, all church events and activities throughout the week

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<sup>387</sup> Packer, 98.

<sup>388</sup> Richard Baxter, in Puritan: *To God’s Glory: Lessons on Puritanism*, eds. Joel R. Beeke and Nicholas J. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 200. As well, consider Robert Burns question, Do I pray that the Spirit may apply His Word to my “business and bosom?” Robert Burns in *Following God Fully: An Introduction to the Puritans*, eds. Joel R. Beeke and Michael Reeves (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 130.

<sup>389</sup> Sproul, vol. 2, 321.

should be looking at and geared toward Sabbath worship (see Dr. Prutow's diagram attached). If you don't give such attention to your week, you are acting like spoiled children who do not appreciate your Heavenly Father. A loving child delights in a day to honor and delight in his father (Isa. 58:13-14). The Lord's Day is the Lord's Day (and not just the Lord's Morning). Obedience is not legalism, but love. You spend time with those whom you love, devotedly.

WCF 21:7: *As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in His Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men, in all ages, He hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him: (k) which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, (l) which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's Day, (m) and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath. (n)*

(k)Exod. 20:8, 10-11; Isa. 56:2, 4, 6-7. (l)Gen. 2:2-3; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 20:7. (m)Rev. 1:10. (n)Exod. 20:8, 10 with Matt. 5:17-18.

The Sabbath is a Creation ordinance. This is partly why in Exodus 20, God says "Remember" the Sabbath Day. It was the only explicit command of the Moral Law before the fall and given by God's own example. It is now the first day of the week to show the change of the priesthood in Christ (Hebrews 7:12). The Sabbath is "to be kept holy unto Him". It is a day to be set apart as special and different from every other day, for the word mainly means "cease". The Christian Sabbath is to be "continued to the end of the world". The Fourth Commandment says you must not cause anyone else to work. Stay out of the stores, restaurants, and supermarkets on the Sabbath. Plan vacation and travel that will not cause you to miss worship and participate in others' work. As it is a day to be holy, save hikes, bike rides, beach trips, television, skateboarding, homework, magazines, newspapers, email, social media, and computer games for other days.<sup>390</sup> These are not unlawful on other days, but they are not holy on the Lord's Day. Consider B&H Photo and Video's website as an example: their website purchasing function is disabled during the Orthodox Jewish Sabbath hours (so are most of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland's web pages disabled on the Christian Sabbath). This Day is blessed by God. If you want to be blessed you will honor it. Like men and women with religious sanctification. For, as one Puritan author said, "He that keeps the Sabbath only by resting from his ordinary work, keeps it but as a beast ..." <sup>391</sup> Conversely, God made six days for working.

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<sup>390</sup> Fesko points out that to properly understand the Larger Catechism's discussion of the Fourth Commandment, it is important to realize its exposition of the law is a "literary genre unto itself, a document that was intended both for theological instruction and for case law for the civil magistrate". Related, the many recreational activities the Larger Catechism discusses (and further in the Directory for Public Worship) in such detail was within the context of the earlier *Book of Sports* written by and to be enforced on the Sabbath by King James himself: "... many recreational activities were the subject of controversy long before the Westminster Assembly"; these were considered a civic concern, for breaking God's Law was understood to warrant national judgment. Fesko, 284, 286. Dickson, 156, 159: "... Christ confirms this command in saying, 'Pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day' [Matt. 24:20]: where the Lord insinuateth that as travelling is troublesome to the body in winter, so would it be to the minds of the godly to travel on that day specially and solemnly set apart for God's worship ... some err who think that, after public worship is ended, the rest of the Lord's Day may be spent in ordinary exercises ... ordinary recreations, games, and sports are our own works."

<sup>391</sup> *Puritan: to God's Glory*, 198. So Thomas Watson writes, "We keep the Sabbath-day holy, by 'consecrating and dedicatin' this day to the 'service of the high God.' It is good to rest on the Sabbath-day from the works of our calling; but if we rest from labour and do no more the ox and the ass keep the Sabbath as well as we; for they rest from labour ... we must not only 'keep a Sabbath,' but 'sanctify' a Sabbath." Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, 100.

Do not be lazy the other six days and then use the Sabbath to catch up on what you sinfully neglected.<sup>392</sup>

WCF 21:8: *This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments, and recreations, (o) but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy. (p)*

(o)Exod. 20:8; Exod. 16:23, 25-26, 29-30; Exod. 31:15-17; Isa. 58:13; Neh. 13:15-19, 21-22. (p)Isa. 58:13; Matt. 12:1-13.

You should prepare your hearts for the Sabbath by slowing down and going to bed at a good hour the night before. Preparation of your “common affairs beforehand” will help you show up and show up ready to worship. If you do not so prepare, it shows you do not seriously consider the Sabbath as special and holy (and thus the LORD). Do you not spend much time getting ready for attending events you care about (like vacation)? Also, during the Sabbath Day, you rest from works, words, and thoughts about worldly employments and recreations so that you can give the whole day to public and private exercises of worship, as it is not to be a day of idleness (WLC 119). Provoke one another to love and good works especially on the Sabbath, and talk about other things the rest of the week. The Sabbath is the first day of the week to prepare and serve God, not the last day of the week to crash on your couch. This is not to say that naps on the Lord’s Day are wrong. But let some reading of the Scriptures and good Christian books and magazines lead you to sleep. Works of necessity and mercy are allowed on the Sabbath, and to be encouraged. For instance, we need doctors and nurses to take care of the sick and injured to preserve life, and we need police officers and the military on duty to protect the peace. Visit the sick and elderly. Show hospitality to brethren and visitors. If you really love Jesus and appreciate all He has done for you—if your life is hid with Christ, you will not fret keeping the Sabbath, but long for and delight in it (Isa. 58:13-14). Do not consider such as “doing your time” (it is forbidden to be weary of the duties of the day, WLC 119). The Sabbath is THE key test of your love of Christ (and the sign of Covenant Life, Ex. 31:12-17). The more you honor the Sabbath, the better your life will flow each week and be prepared for heaven. Van Dixhoorn gives a helpful summary of how to use the Sabbath Day along with a warning about excusing unsanctified activities: “A day with morning and evening worship, and fellowship and hospitality in between, tends to answer most Sabbath practice questions ... And we should be aware that pious efforts to justify some sensible Sunday activities are often too fancy, and ultimately undermine the uniqueness of Sabbath worship and acts of mercy.”<sup>393</sup>

#### Some thoughts on the Sabbath Day Worship by Thomas Watson, in *The Ten Commandments*:

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<sup>392</sup> Van Dixhoorn’s clarification of “Sabbaths” and “Sabbath” is helpful with what Paul says about “sabbath days” (“sabbaths” in Greek), which does not refer to the Decalogue’s Sabbath, a perpetually binding Creation and moral norm for God’s people at all times: “The first type of Sabbath in Scripture was special, almost always beginning a special festive time and almost always on the first day of the week or the first day of a feast. These days were often referred to in the plural, as they are in Paul’s letter to the Colossians (*Col. 2:16*): they are often collectively called ‘Sabbaths’. Leviticus 23 is one of the passages in Scripture which mentions the special ‘first day Sabbaths’ and the feasts which they inaugurated ... The first-day Sabbaths were special, but the high point of all these ... was declared the grand Sabbath, the year of Jubilee ... The second type of Sabbath was a last-day Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath ... usually referred to in the singular, and is called ‘the Sabbath’.” Van Dixhoorn, 290, 291. See PECA’s sermon on Leviticus 23 to further bear out the Sabbath Day is distinguished from typological sabbaths.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid, 295.



“THIS [Fourth] commandment was engraved in stone by God’s own finger, and it will be our comfort to have it engraved in our hearts” (93). “The sanctifying the Sabbath ... consists in two things, in resting from our own works, and in a conscientious discharge of our religious duty” (93). “... as if God had said, The Sabbath-day is my due, I challenge a special right in it, and no other has any claim to it. He who robs me of THIS DAY, and puts it to common uses, is a sacrilegious person, he steals from the crown of heaven, and I will in nowise hold him guiltless” (93-94). “It is not only a day of honour to God, but a day of blessing to us; it is not only a day wherein we give God worship, but a day wherein he gives us grace. On this day a blessing drops down from heaven ... This day, religiously observed, entails a blessing upon our souls, our estate, and our posterity. Not keeping it brings a curse. Jer xvii 27)” (94). “How would the meditation of heaven make us heavenly in our Sabbath exercises!” (106). “The whole Sabbath is to be dedicated to God. It is not said, Keep a part of the Sabbath holy, but the whole day must be religiously observed” (117). “... thou must not do that which may please the carnal part, as in sports and pastimes. This is to do the devil’s work on God’s day” (118). “This day is to be honoured by all good Christians, and had in high veneration” (119). “... a conscientious keeping of the Sabbath seasons the heart for God’s service all the week after. Christian, the more holy thou art on a Sabbath, the more holy thou wilt be on the week following.”

### **Suggested Readings:**

- *Instrumental Worship in the Church*, John Lafayette Girardeau (chapter one is great for RPW)
- *Public Worship 101: An Introduction to the Biblical Theology of Worship, the Elements of Worship, Exclusive Psalmody, and A Capella Psalmody*, Dennis Prutow
- *Old Light on New Worship: Musical Instruments and the Worship of God, a Theological, Historical and Psychological Study*, John Price.
- *Commentary on the Larger Catechism*, vol. 2, Thomas Ridgeley: pp 435-437 where he says instruments are a type of joy and have concluded in Christ, but psalms continue (435, 437), and a hymn is a psalm (436); he also explains the continued use of imprecatory psalms (438-443)
- “Westminster and Worship Examined: A Review of Nick Needham’s essay on the Westminster Confession of Faith’s teaching concerning the regulative principle, the singing of psalms, and the use of musical instruments in the public worship of God.”, in *The Confessional Presbyterian 4* (2008) : 253-266, Matthew Winzer
- *A Vindication of the Doctrine That the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry*, John Knox
- *Counterfeit Miracles*, B.B. Warfield
- Listen to *A Holy God and Holy Days* by Robert McCurley (re: celebrating Christmas in worship or privately) at <http://www.sermonaudio.com/playpopup.asp?SID=1225111136427>.
- *Worship: From Genesis to Revelation*, Douglas Comin
- PRPC website: Resources/Articles and Media/Practice, under “Purity of Worship” and “Sabbath”
- “Sabbath: A Day to Keep” – J. C. Ryle
- “Lord’s Day Observance: Man’s Proper Response to the Fourth Commandment” -- Robert L. Reymond
- *Talking to God: the Theology of Prayer*, Wayne Spear
- *A Guide to Prayer*, Isaac Watts
- *A Way to Pray*, Matthew Henry
- “The Westminster Standards: A Comprehensive Treatment of the Sabbath” -- Mark Shand
- PRPC sermons ([sermonaudio.com/puritanchurch](http://sermonaudio.com/puritanchurch)) on the Sabbath, Means of Grace, and Prayer (including the Lord’s Prayer) in the Westminster Larger Catechism series. See also sermons on the Sabbath in Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus (it comes up often, search “Sabbath”).
- For enjoyment: [www.nathanclarkgeorge.com](http://www.nathanclarkgeorge.com), [www.sonsofkorah.com](http://www.sonsofkorah.com), and [www.randystonehill.com](http://www.randystonehill.com).

- “Tithing is not Typical” by Grant Van Leuven on our Resources/Duty website page

**Assigned Readings for April 13, 2022 (estimated when finished with supplemental series for chapter 21): Oaths and Vows/Civil Magistrate**

- WCF 22-23 and Scripture references
- “Will Man Rob God?” by R.C. Sproul under “Tithing” on our Resources/Duty website page
- “The Christian Privilege and Duty of Tithing” by J.J. Lim on our Resources/Duty website page