

Understanding Worship – Part Nine

October 17th, 2010

Adapted from John Herbert's Notes; Presented by Jeanne Alley

1). Let's begin with our foundational Scripture from the Gospel of John –

John 4:23-24

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

2). Throughout our study of worshipping the Father 'in spirit and truth' we have seen that worship and faithful obedience to the commands of God are synonymous terms. And, our faithful obedience requires the death of our flesh for our obedience to be accomplished.

- And in particular, in our last study on this topic, we looked at God's command to us to forgive one another, and how forgiveness is an integral part of loving one another in accord with that stated in 1 Corinthians 13. We also read this –

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Mark 11:26

"But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

- And as we noted last time, forgiveness is an attribute of the character of God, who is Spirit, and therefore our ability to forgive comes from the spirit and cannot be accomplished in the flesh.
 - Our flesh seeks to judge and condemn, our spirit alone has the grace to forgive.

3). We also see this recorded in John's gospel –

John 15:11-14

(Jesus speaking) "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. 12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

- Again we see the command to love one another. On this occasion it is connected with laying down our life, and we are to do this as Christ has loved us.
- And the love that Christ has for us cannot be separated from the redemption which He purchased through His death on the cross, which of itself speaks of forgiveness on God's part towards us.
- Going back to John 15:14, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you," those who are the 'friends of Christ' are those who will faithfully keep His commands, just as Abraham did -

James 2:23

And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

- Let's look at the context in which Christ speaks of laying down His life. He is speaking to His disciples, those who are already eternally saved, and therefore His laying down His life moves beyond its connection with the free gift. Christ lays down His life for His friends--friendship with God requires faithful obedience and only those who are eternally saved are expected to be obedient. This should make it easy for us to see.
- Remember, Christ is not only the Passover Lamb for those in need of eternal redemption, but He is also the sacrifice and the scapegoat, providing forgiveness and cleansing for the sins of the eternally saved, providing atonement, with respect to the Kingdom which is to come.
- In fact, whichever way we come at this, whether from an eternal standpoint or a millennial standpoint, the laying down of Christ's life, His dying in the flesh, provides the means for our forgiveness, whether referring to the free gift or the salvation of the soul.

4). In the same way, *our* laying down our life for our friends (which contextually would be those who are faithfully obedient, fellow believers - our brother, our sister, our neighbor) is **also** inseparably connected to forgiveness.

- Laying down our life (dying to our flesh) in order to forgive our brother is the greatest expression of love as it is exactly the same, only on a human level, as God has done for

us. Our forgiving one another does not provide redemption (obviously, as only God can do that), but it is part our redemptive process with regards to the saving of our soul. Unless we forgive we will not be forgiven.

- This is a most profound and amazing truth.
- Choosing to forgive is the ultimate expression of the love we find in 1 Corinthians 13.
- And please let's remember what we have read there –

1Corinthians 13:1-8

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails.

- It is the first three verses of this scripture that are particularly challenging for us – “though I have knowledge and faith but don't have love...IT PROFITS ME NOTHING.” There is so much that we can be involved in that would appear to have us headed on the right track with regards to the Kingdom...but if it is without the application of the love (*remembering what God sees as love*) that is then described in verses 4-8 (which must involve forgiving one another) – **all of our activity and all of our studying will profit us nothing**. It would be work of wood, hay and straw.
- This is food for some serious thought.

5). Now here is another serious thought that we need to see in connection with this –

1Corinthians 12:20-27

But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the

members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

- There is of course the church universal, the body of Christ that is made up of all Christians from this dispensation.
- And then more specifically, we have individual groups of believers who make up a local body – which would be us, Cornerstone Christian Fellowship.
- This scripture is often taught with respect to the allocation of jobs within a church setting. But rather than think that way, let us look at what is recorded in v25-26 - ‘that the members should have the same care for one another’ and ‘if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it’. And if ‘one member is honored all members rejoice with it.’
- If it is true that when one suffers we all suffer... and if one is honored then all rejoice... then we would also realize that in the same way sin against one another or unforgiveness towards one another has an impact upon the entire body. We are not in isolation, or an island unto ourselves –

Romans 12:5

...so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

- We are members of one another. This is a scriptural truth, whether or not it is a practical reality.

6). However, most of us, within a Christian setting, have been so brutalized by the judgment and condemnation of those who should have borne our burdens with us, that we have been forced to wear a spiritual mask to protect us from further hurt.

- We live in fear of being unmasked, and in fear of being seen as a failure by those around us because of the things we struggle with. And in many settings, struggling with things is seen as a sign of having no faith; or worse still--as evidence of never being saved in the first place.
- It is not supposed to be like this, nor can it be this way if we are in true pursuit of the Kingdom. It may require a paradigm shift in our understanding, but then what else is new?

1John 4:17-18

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love;

but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

- Note what our scripture says here. If love is brought to a place of completion, or reaches its goal among us, then we may have boldness in the day of judgment – this is a great encouragement for us.
- Our scripture also says that there is no fear in love. And if we think about this for a moment, we will see the truth of it. If we all love one another according to 1 Corinthians 13, then there would no longer be any fear of judgment or condemnation from others within the body, we would have no need to be concerned that our business would be all over the street the next day, because no one amongst us would gossip. In fact, we would have complete trust in each and everyone and would be able to openly share our struggles because that which Christ has said would be our common reality –

Matthew 7:3-5

3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

John 8:7

So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

- This is not wishful thinking... this can and needs to be a present reality.

7). Another facet of our fear comes from the idea that everyone else is doing so much better than we are, and our struggle is somehow unique to us. But this is contrary to the evidence of scripture –

1Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

- Do we see what the scripture says? 'No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.' The struggles that we go through are common to us all. Our circumstance may be different, but we all struggle with the same things. And anyone who says they struggle with nothing is blatantly a liar.

- None of us are yet perfected, we are all in the process. And therefore, we are all competing on a level playing field.
- And our relational involvement with one another and our interdependence on one another is there as a strength for us, and is the God given way to bring us to the finish line in our race of the faith that we may receive the prize.

8). With that in mind, look at what we find recorded in the Book of James –

James 5:13-16

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

- The context of James Chapter 5 is ‘behold the Judge is standing at the door’ with respect to enduring suffering and being properly prepared for our imminent appearance at the Judgment Seat.
- With that in mind, let’s look at this scripture in some detail. ‘Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.’ Keep in mind our context: suffering here literally means enduring affliction and this would bring to mind, contextually –

2Corinthians 4:17

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal [age lasting] weight of glory,

- And in the midst of our affliction, what does scripture admonish us to do?

1Peter 4:19

Therefore let those who suffer *according to the will of God* commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

- *The suffering one needs to ‘pray’.* Which means acknowledging our complete trust in a faithful God to work through our suffering to bring about the salvation of our soul.
- Now verse 14 is subject to much misinterpretation. “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” But remember, our context within the chapter is imminent judgment with regards to the Kingdom, and our immediate context within these verses is enduring

suffering according to the will of God in verse 13, and confessing our trespasses to one another in verse 16.

- Therefore, within our context here, a reference to physical sickness makes no sense. What connection would there be between physical healing and our being properly prepared to appear before the Judge? Rather, we should understand being 'sick' here in the same way that Isaiah describes Israel as being sick in –

Isaiah 1:5b

...The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints.

- It is a **spiritual** sickness. The word 'sick' is the Hebrew word 'astheneo' from 772; to be feeble (in any sense):--be diseased, impotent folk (man), (be) sick, (be, be made) weak.
- Here we have a Christian who is facing imminent judgment, whose faith has become weak. Who is then, as a result, spiritually sick...who is struggling to continue –

Hebrews 12:3

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

- Has anyone here ever become weary and discouraged in your soul? Does your mind tell you there is no way that your soul can be saved because of who and what you are? This is a common experience.
- The solution, if we find ourselves in this condition, is *not* to hide or consider ourselves a failure, or give up and walk away, but to call for the Elders of the church to pray over us, anointing us with oil – not a literal splashing on of the olive oil, but anointing in the same sense that Ruth is to anoint herself with oil in preparation for her appearance on the threshing floor. The elders are to speak the word of God, to pour on the Spirit of God through the word of God, to encourage and exhort and strengthen the one who at this moment cannot do it for himself –

Hebrews 12:12-13

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

- This is so that we may continue and not give up as we see the finish line in sight.

- Then, the prayer that is prayed in respect of the faith, which focuses on the race and the goal out ahead, will save, or deliver, or preserve the 'sick' out of their weakness--

Galatians 6:9

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

- This is the very thought that we find in -

Hebrews 4:16

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

- And of course, our sins will be forgiven us because we would have confessed them-

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

- And implicit in this is a recognition, acceptance, and sharing of personal struggle... looking to the God-given relationships that have been provided within the church to bring us through those struggles. *Not just for ourselves*, but for the sake of the body, as we are individually members of one another.
- The elders being those who have been given charge over our souls, as those who will give account.
- And then in verse 16 of James 5, we are told to 'Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.'
 - We are to confess our trespasses to one another...
 - Pray for one another...
 - With the result that we may be healed.
- This is a verse that strikes fear in the heart of many...'Are we supposed to stand here and make a catalogue of our trespasses? And do we do this every Sunday?' - Well, let's look at the verse.
 - The word 'confess' is the Greek word 'exomologeō', which means to acknowledge or (by implication, of assent) agree fully:--confess, profess, promise.

- The word 'trespasses' is from the root word 'parapipto,' which means to fall aside, i.e. (figuratively) to apostatize:--fall away.
- So then, this is essentially a repetition of what we have just looked at in calling for the elders, but broadening the base.
- We are to acknowledge when we have stepped back from the race, when we are discouraged, when we are weary...and we are to acknowledge this to one another, whether it be to the elders or a small group or the whole congregation.
- The important thing here is not the setting in which the acknowledgment takes place, but our readiness to ask for help when we need it.
- And this is a temptation that is common to man, which is why we should pray for one another. And as we do this in faithful obedience to the word, having complete trust in a faithful Creator, so we become that righteous man whose fervent prayer avails much...*so we are a true worshipper.*
- And in this there is healing...again, not a physical healing, but healing in the sense of being made whole, being made complete.
- And how important is that as we realize that the Judge is at the door?
- And we should see all this in the context of -

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

9). Our scripture here in James cannot be separated from the reason given for our gathering together in -

Heb 10:24-25

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

- This is all a part of our process.

10). One final scripture on forgiveness -

Luke 17:3-4

"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

- As we look at this, it appears as if our scripture here is in contradiction of

Mark 11:25-26

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

- But obviously scripture does not contradict itself. Rather, we are looking at two different facets of the same picture.
- We need to see Luke 17 in connection with Matthew 18 where the Lord is dealing with the same subject, but with more detail added –

Matthew 18:15-17

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

- In our Mark scripture the focus is really ourselves...How are we to respond to the brother who sins against us? Clearly we are to forgive him.
- In Luke and Matthew, however, the focus is on the one who sinned...with a view to his repentance...so that he may be restored in the race of the faith..
- The conditional clause, 'if he repents forgive him' has to do with the need of the one in sin. We will forgive whether our brother asks for it or not, but if he does ask for forgiveness then we are obligated to speak the words.
- In Mark we forgive, but we are not obligated to say anything to our brother – in Luke and Matthew we are.
- If our brother comes and asks for our forgiveness, it is not OK for us to say, 'That's OK it doesn't matter', or 'Forget it', or, 'There's nothing to forgive'.

- The one asking for forgiveness needs to hear us say the words 'I forgive you' and it is in this sense that we should understand the phrase, 'if he repents forgive him.'

11). And so, in conclusion for today, let us have firmly established in our thinking that our worship of the Father in spirit and truth is inextricably connected to the relationship we have one with another.

- Our *worship* (and remember what worship is, it's the recognition by the one 'worshipping' of the superiority of the one being worshipped - its faithful obedience) – *our worship* will be realized in the way we relate to one another - our love for one another, our forgiving one another, our restoring one another, our confessing to one another, our bearing one another's burdens.
- And all of this with our eyes fixed firmly on the prize.