

# Biblical Worship

## Week 7 – Elements of the Worship Service

**Introduction:** Christ is central in our worship. He fulfills all of the promises of the Old Testament and brings us salvation through His once for all sacrifice. He is our Sabbath rest. We communicate the message of His salvation through God’s redemptive story as He has revealed to us in holy scripture. This message is the means that God used to bring us to salvation and the means by which we cherish our relationship with God in Christ. We meet on a regular weekly basis not only because this was the pattern seen in the early church but because we are commanded not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25). We have examined biblically what should shape our worship and historically how this has been carried out, but how do we worship Christ publicly in a way that honors Him today? To answer this question, we begin in the book of Hebrews.

### I. Holding Fast Our Confession

- A.** We gather throughout the week to “hold fast our confession” of Jesus Christ and His calling over our lives.
- † **Hebrews 10:19-25** - *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,<sup>20</sup> by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,<sup>21</sup> and having a High Priest over the house of God,<sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.<sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.<sup>24</sup> And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,<sup>25</sup> 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. **PTQ***
- B.** Using the imagery that this passage gives us we see the essence of our worship gathering. He says, “having boldness to enter the Holiest.” Opposite to how one would have approached the Holiest place (Holy of Holies) under the Old Testament system, we are to approach the Holiest place with boldness. How is this done? “By the blood of Jesus.” He is the veil, the barrier that becomes the bridge if you will, between God and man. He is also the High Priest who brings us into the dwelling place of God.
- C.** We are to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” The description of “hearts sprinkled” and “bodies washed with pure water” brings us back to the sacrificial system where priests would have used basins of clear water to wash themselves and other sacred vessels. For the believer, this also eludes to the purifying work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life by means of the Word of God.<sup>1</sup>  
**PTQ**

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Study Bible*. Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006.

- † **Ephesians 5:25-26** - *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word **PTQ***
- † **Titus 3:4-5** - *But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, <sup>5</sup> not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*
- D. We are to “hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” **PTQ**
- E. This passage is where we are called to assemble ourselves together and to exhort one another. We gather in order to exhort, to stir up love and good works.
- † **Acts 2:40-47** - *And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” <sup>41</sup> Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. <sup>42</sup> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. <sup>43</sup> Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. <sup>46</sup> So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. **PTQ***
- F. As we see from the book of Acts, the early church was gathering together daily in the temple. They broke bread from house to house. They sold their possessions in order to give to one another as needs arose. **PTQ**
- G. In our previous lesson we highlighted that the aspects of Christ-centered worship are the following:
1. Adoration (recognition of God’s greatness and grace)
  2. Confession (acknowledgment of our sin and need for grace)
  3. Assurance (affirmation of God’s provision of grace)
  4. Thanksgiving (expression of praise and thanks for God’s grace)
  5. Petition and Intercession (expression of dependence on God’s grace)
  6. Instruction (acquiring the knowledge to grow in grace)
  7. Communion/Fellowship (celebrating the grace of union with Christ and his people)
  8. Charge and Blessing (living for and in the light of God’s grace) <sup>8</sup>
- H. The early church lived in community with one another. Driven by the Lord’s faithfulness, they held fast the confession of their faith through the gathering of the saints and the power of the Holy Spirit. This community was defined by three aspects that we see in these passages: **PTQ**
1. Gathering
    - Adoration and Confession
  2. Exhorting
    - Assurance, Thanksgiving, Petition, Instruction, Charge and Blessing

### 3. Serving

- Communion and Fellowship **PTQ**

- I. In all the elements of the worship service, we see them culminate into these three overarching emphases. The gathering of God’s people together. Christian saints exhorting one another to obey the Lord Jesus in all that He commanded. These exhortations ought to drive us to serve one another and to love our neighbor. **PTQ**

## II. The Call to Worship

- A. Bryan Chapell talks about three ways that God calls us to Himself.

1. God calls us to worship
2. God calls us to respond to His revelation
3. God calls us to respond to His redemption<sup>2</sup> **PTQ**

- B. At this point in the worship service our gathering is moving into exhortation. Where we are worshiping the Lord because He is God. Because it is He who made us. Because He is worthy. We invite the congregation of saints to respond to His glory with us through this call to worship.

- C. A call to worship could be reading a scripture passage that encourages us to think about God’s attributes and to worship Him. It could also be a combination where the leader is adding a “call” to the words of a scripture passage.

† **Psalm 95:1-2** - *Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*

† **Psalm 105:1-3** - *Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! <sup>2</sup>Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! <sup>3</sup>Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord!*

† **Psalm 118:24** - *This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.* **PTQ**

- D. “Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.” Let us exalt his name together.

*(Ps. 124:8; note the specific words of exhortation added by the worship leader at the end of the Scripture quotation. This addition allows the worship leader to use the original statement of truth as the basis for the Call to Worship.)*<sup>3</sup> **PTQ**

- E. There are also responsive or antiphonal calls to worship. These involve the congregation by having them recite a phrase from the text being read or giving them a similar line to recite together following the worship leader. **PTQ**

- F. The job of the worship leader is to provide guidance for the congregation by facilitating an atmosphere of worship. Explaining the next text being read or the entrance into the next song is part of the art of worship leading.

<sup>2</sup> Bryan Chapell, [Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 160-161.

<sup>3</sup> Bryan Chapell, [Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 163.

### III. The Affirmation of Faith

- A. An affirmation of faith in a service could be the reading of a traditional creed or the worship leader making affirmative statements about beliefs that the body of believers can all agree to and say “amen” to. In many contexts, the affirmation of faith takes the form of a scripture reading that communicates a truth or a set of truths that reminds those who are in attendance of why we are gathering.
- B. Some examples of ancient creeds would be:

**1. The Apostle’s Creed** PTQ

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\* church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*\*(that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places)<sup>4</sup>*

**2. The Nicene Creed** PTQ

We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
begotten from the Father before all ages,  
God from God,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made;  
of the same essence as the Father.  
Through him all things were made.

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<sup>4</sup> “Apostles’ Creed.” Christian Reformed Church, 1988.  
<https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/apostles-creed>.

For us and for our salvation  
 he came down from heaven;  
 he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,  
 and was made human.  
 He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;  
 he suffered and was buried.  
 The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.  
 He ascended to heaven  
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
 He will come again with glory  
 to judge the living and the dead.  
 His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,  
 the Lord, the giver of life.  
 He proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
 and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.  
 He spoke through the prophets.  
 We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
 We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
 We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
 and to life in the world to come. Amen.<sup>5</sup>

- C. The benefit of using a confession to communicate these truths is that these confessions have been affirmed by the early church fathers and believers who have come before us. It is not that these confessions hold some sort of weight above scripture (may it never be) but that scripture must be rightly interpreted and understood. A confessional standard simply gives us insight into what others have affirmed before us. **PTQ**
- D. Nevertheless, there are plenty of passages in scripture that operate as affirmations of our faith. We do well to remember these and utilize them in our worship services.
- † **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** - *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!*<sup>5</sup> *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.* **PTQ**
- † **Ephesians 2:4-10** - *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*<sup>5</sup> *even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*<sup>6</sup> *and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*<sup>7</sup> *that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*<sup>8</sup> *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*<sup>9</sup> *not of works, lest anyone*

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<sup>5</sup> “Nicene Creed.” Christian Reformed Church, 1988.  
<https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/nicene-creed>.

*should boast.*<sup>10</sup> *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

- E. In class example of an affirmation of faith sung by Caleb - "I Cannot Tell"
1. Side note: This is one reason why we ought to think seriously about the songs we select for a worship service. Can we affirm the words that are sung? Is it an affirmation of our faith? If we can't say that, then it's probably better left out of the service even if there are some things that we like about the song.

#### IV. The Confession of Sin

- A. Because we still deal with sin in our lives, it is important that confession is a part of our worship experience. After all, in our private worship, if we have no confession of sin, we are probably not understanding the seriousness of our sin and communing with God as we are called to. Recognizing our sin and confessing it to the Lord is a part of our daily life as a follower of Christ. Therefore, it must make it into our corporate worship gatherings as well. **PTQ**
- B. Chapell puts it this way: "Those in whom the Spirit of God dwells are longing to confess their sin in order to experience the mercy of God. In fact, we should question whether the gospel itself is present, if there has been no acknowledgment of sin. If, because of local traditions or tastes, a formal Confession of Sin raises too many red flags for inclusion in the worship service, the truths of the gospel still require there to be some form of confession in the songs, prayers, or preaching. The grace of God has no present glory if the sin it overcomes is not a present reality, and the ministry of Christ has no significance if the sin he came to defeat will not even be faced."<sup>6</sup> **PTQ**
- C. Biblical examples of confession of sin are numerous:
- † **Psalm 25:6-7;11** - *Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses, For they are from of old.* <sup>7</sup>*Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions... For Your name's sake, O Lord, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.*
  - † **Psalm 40:11-13** - *Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord; Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me.* <sup>12</sup>*For innumerable evils have surrounded me; My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; They are more than the hairs of my head; Therefore my heart fails me.* <sup>13</sup>*Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me!*
  - † **Psalm 51:1-4** - *Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.* <sup>2</sup>*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.* <sup>3</sup>*For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me.* <sup>4</sup>*Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.* **PTQ**

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<sup>6</sup> Bryan Chapell, [\*Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 182.

- D. Examples of confession of sin (“When I survey the wondrous cross” – traditional; “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” – modern)

#### V. The Assurance of Pardon

- A. As Chapell mentions, the Reformers and those following the protestant reformation would often struggle with the idea of the assurance of pardon because they did not want to give off the notion that the minister had any power in himself to forgive sins. While this is a worthy concern, God’s people need to be reminded that they have been pardoned, that they have been forgiven of their sins and God looks on them in love as His own child. **PTQ**
- B. “Joy should resonate in the words of the minister. The goodness of the gospel should pour from the heart with a voice warmed by grace, with a face softened by love, and with eyes that meet hurting eyes with the assurance of the Father’s mercy. God’s people should know his peace by the way the minister expresses the Assurance of Pardon.”<sup>7</sup>
- C. The scriptures are full of passages that remind us of God’s grace and the forgiveness of sins that we have received in Christ Jesus.
  - † **Psalm 32:3-5** - *When I kept silent, my bones grew old. Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah*  
*I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.*
  - † **1 Peter 2:24-25** - *who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.*<sup>25</sup> *For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. **PTQ***
- D. Examples of assurance of Pardon in songs (“My Faith Has Found a Resting Place” – Traditional; “Who am I” – Modern)

**Conclusion:** Biblical worship is a gathering of saints who have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb coming together to obey His command. In our gathering, we exhort one another to hold fast the confession of our faith. When we begin this exhortation, we see that the flow of the service brings us into a position of worship before the Lord. We affirm our faith and in Whom we have believed. The confession of our sin and the assurance of our pardon in Christ brings us to the proper place for our hearts to rest before we are charged to go and serve. This indeed is gospel shaped worship. Just as when we first believed and in our daily walk with Jesus, we come to His presence acknowledging the truth of who He is. In that affirmation we see our sin and confess it. Our hearts are revived with the remembrance of the forgiveness of sins offered through Jesus Christ. The obedience that comes through acts of service is a fruit of this genuine repentance and it is the love of Christ that motivates our service. We gather, we exhort, and we serve together because of our Savior’s love.

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<sup>7</sup> Bryan Chapell, [\*Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 196.

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