

Who Is to Praise the Lord?

In this series of articles from Psalm 150, we're learning from the Psalmist about the importance of public worship in the local church as well as all of life worship. In my previous article we focused on the "how" of worship. We saw that we're to worship God with our hearts, words, and actions. That is to say, we're to worship God with everything we have! In our last article from this series, we want to look at what the Psalmist has to say about "who" is to praise the LORD:

—*Everything that has Breath*

This last section is sort of a summary of what's gone before. The focus here is on the "who" of the praise of God. Who is to worship God? "*Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!*" Even though mankind made in the image of God may be the primary focus of this passage, we shouldn't exclude the categories of animals that we can see in Psalm 148:7-12, including "sea creatures...beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds." The heavens, along with the creatures of the earth and sea, give praise to God *simply because he created them*, while mankind made in God's image can *consciously* praise the LORD. This truth of all creation worship may remind us of Revelation 5:13 where we read:

"And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!'" As we come to the close of this series, I want to remind us that corporate worship as well as all of life worship *always* has God as its priority focus. We saw that one aspect of the worship of God is worship for his "mighty deeds" of *personal redemption* which can never be removed from the love of the covenant community whom Christ died for. Christians have a responsibility to one another that God takes very seriously. A very important confessional document upheld by many Reformed churches—including the Presbyterian Church in America—the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 26.1 says it this way: "All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ, their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces and sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are *obliged* to the performance of such duties, public and private as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man."

How is loving one another like the Bible teaches directly connected to our love for and worship of the triune God? It begins by *putting first things first*. C.S. Lewis once wrote, "When I have learned to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now. In so far as I learn to love my earthly dearest *at the expense of God and instead of God*, I shall be moving towards the state in which I shall not love my earthly dearest at all. When first things are put first, second things *are not suppressed but increased*."

Lewis was right. When we can possibly look at one another and yet be unwilling to seek to truly love one another, we need to recognize that—it's not that we don't really *love one another enough*. The reality is that *we don't love God enough*. We should know that genuine love doesn't overlook sin. True love wants people to continue to address, by grace, the sinful issues in their lives. But genuine love declares, "As far as it depends on me, I'll do all that I can to be sure that our relationship is honoring to God." Healthy relationships are not measured by the absence of problems but by the way the problems are handled. How can we apply what we've heard from Psalm 150?

I'm focusing this application on worshiping God by loving what God loves, particularly, by loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. This cannot be separated from God's mighty deeds of redemption. If I'm not as loving as I should be—which is always inclusive of a biblical understanding of selfless sacrifice—what can I do to address the situation? Although I'll focus on our love for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, this does not exhaust our love for others made in God's image. What I've listed below is just a sampling of the verses that speak of how we're to worship God by living rightly together in covenant community. These are some of the "one another" passages from the New Testament epistles. So, then, singing this Psalm should remind us that in our redemption, we're united to God but that we're also united to one another. Therefore, we have a grace given "obligation" of biblical love for one another.

- Love one another; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 1 Jn. 4:11.
- Outdo one another in showing honor. Romans 12:10
- Live in harmony with one another. Romans 12:16; 15:5
- Do not pass judgment on one another or cause another to stumble. Rom. 14:13
- Pursue peace and mutual upbuilding. Rom. 14:19; 15:2
- Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you. Rom. 15:7
- Do not be puffed up in favor of one against another. 1 Cor. 4:6
- No division in the body but the members have the same care one for another. 1 Cor. 12:25
- Through love, serve one another. Gal. 5:13
- Do not envy one another. Gal. 5:26
- Bear with one another in love. Eph. 4:2
- Be kind to and forgive one another. Eph. 4:32
- Pray for one another. James 5:16
- Have compassion for one another. 1 Peter 3:8
- Serve one another with our God given gifts. 1 Pt. 4:10
- Fellowship with one another. 1 John 1:7

Christians are those whom Jesus Christ died for. Although we'll never do this perfectly, may God help us as we continue to seek, by grace, to worship him well which can never be totally separated from seeking to love one another well.

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