

The Barometer of Our Worship of God

I began this series of articles by looking at how churches have often been involved in ‘worship wars’ directly connected to personal preferences of differing music styles. I structured this series from Psalm 33 under three headings; the first being the beauty of the worship of God. I noted that in the first three verses of this Psalm there are no less than six commands that give us important insight into the biblical truth that God, himself, teaches us how he desires to be worshiped. This is a critical truth that is often lost in the 21st century churches. We run the risk of offending God when we design worship services around man-centered ideas (e.g., seeker sensitive, entertainment driven, modern attention span surveys, comfort as a first priority, etc.) versus biblically structured, Christ-centered worship. God’s plan for worship is beautiful because he designed it and Psalm 33 gives us, at least in part, a picture of that beauty.

The second heading that we’ve looked at is the basis of the worship of God. In other words, what does this Psalm teach us that should give us a healthy foundation of reverence for and adoration of God? Beginning in verses 4-5 we saw that God is faithful in all his words and work. In verses 6-9 we’re amazed as we ponder God’s creative and sustaining power over all the heavens and the earth. Following this in verses 10ff we saw that God controls the nations. Because God is Sovereign King over all that he’s made, placing ultimate trust in governments rather than in God is an unbiblical way to live. The last basis for our worship of God that we noted was that, since ‘the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him...that he may deliver their soul from death’ (vs. 18), we can be assured that he loves his children and we will know the blessings of his love, both in this life and in the life to come (vs. 19).

I want to conclude this series by looking at my third heading: the barometer of our worship of God. I’m using the word barometer as ‘something that indicates fluctuations.’ This word is used in our culture to identify fluctuations in a number of areas, e.g., the housing market or government polls on public opinion. If we’ve lost interest in gathering corporately with the people of God every Lord’s Day for worship; if we see no need to obey God and point other’s to the gospel of grace alone by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, the following questions can be helpful as a barometer to see where our desire for God may be moving in an unhealthy direction. These questions are based on the last three verses of Psalm 33 and can help us to see where confession and repentance may be needed. The questions below assume that you’re already resting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation.

—Are you ‘waiting on the LORD’ every day, even when life is difficult? The Hebrew verb translated ‘wait’ is active and not passive. God ordinarily ‘helps and shields us’ (vs. 20) in the ways that he determines in his word which is inclusive of regularly gathering for corporate worship, hearing the word of God preached and taught, participating in the sacraments, prayer and fellowship (Acts 2:42ff; Romans 10:14-17; 1 Corinthians 1:17ff). To actively wait on the LORD is simply to seek to obey him in all of life and certainly as we await his answer to our prayers.

—Is your 'heart glad in God' because you 'trust in his holy name' (vs. 21)? A heart that is glad in and trusts God will regularly find joy and contentment as well as fewer times of anxiety and unhealthy fear in all that God is doing in your life.

—Are you resting in 'the steadfast love of the Covenant LORD?' God's covenant love is given to those who are resting in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation (Psalm 23; John 10). This is our true 'hope' (vs. 22).

May God help us to see the beauty and basis of worship and may we check our barometer to see if there are unhealthy fluctuations in our desire for the proper worship of God.

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