

Praise God . . . Always, I

by Dr. Manford George Gutzke

The Meaning of Worship

Do you know what we mean when we use the word "worship?"

Worship is something that you do in response to something or somebody that is esteemed most highly. As a person becomes conscious of the world, and identifies objects, there is appraisal, evaluation, comparison with resulting preference or aversion which leads to choice on the one hand or rejection on the other in the process of selection. As objects are esteemed they are rated in preference as the individual selects and constructs the world in which living is experienced.

The world consists of situations, things and persons experienced by the individual who feels love or fear according to his pleasure or pain in his personal interactions. In becoming aware of the world of multiple objects, there are many different things around us, the individual compares and prefers one above another. Thus there are situations, things, and persons that are liked. What a person likes he wants more and more. What he likes most he wants most.

Eventually one object becomes the most preferred, and becomes the pearl of great price. The boy may meet many girls, liking some, disliking others; but once he falls in love that girl is his queen. He wants to be with her all the time. In her presence he has joy, in her absence he is disconsolate. When his attitude towards that girl includes adoration, homage, service, we can properly say he just worships her.

Some can have a similar response to a landscape or to a seascape. Some will strive to see the sun rising from a certain mountaintop. Some will be enthralled with the beauty of a sunset. To some it may be a certain mountain, to others a particular lake, the sight of which gives joy. As people look at certain things they have certain joy. They do not get rich, this does not get their work done, but it gives them pleasure. Others have similar response to works of art and music.

I can remember in my own life one experience like this that was outstanding. It was when we had our first child. When the baby was born into our home and we finally got that baby home from the hospital, as we were taking care of that baby, I could not get over the wonder of it all. I can remember myself sitting beside that baby's crib, and just looking at that baby. I want to tell you a little baby girl lying in the crib is a beautiful sight to see, especially if she is asleep. That is just wonderful. I would sit there and look at this sleeping baby, and just marvel. I was amazed to think that that child was ours. Part of me was right there. I did not do anything, I could not give any thing, but I was deeply, profoundly stirred. Would you understand if I were to say to you that I always felt in some way that I came away from such times a better man? Now that is what worship really is.

In the experience of a believer in Christ there is another, a further dimension. As a member of the body of Christ the believer shares in the consciousness which the Holy Spirit gives him; that is, an awareness of the person of Christ Jesus. From within there is a response of adoration, exaltation, homage and service to the Lord.

This response grows as it is expressed in acts of worship. Now there are things that you do because of the way in which you feel. For instance, love in the heart can prompt talk, but there is far more to love than can be said. There is no time that it seems more clear to say that actions speak louder than words. Yet words have their place. Even in the Scriptures we read, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

Public utterance takes the form of vocal praying, public reading of Scripture, psalms, hymns, spiritual

songs, and prophesying, which is preaching and teaching. This utterance must be heard distinctly. In the book of Nehemiah there is a passage which tells about how the Jews who had come back to the city of Jerusalem were gathered together for public worship. We read "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8).

I wish I could put this in front of every preacher and every Bible class teacher and every praying person. "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." That is the way in which the reading can be more profitable.

In I Corinthians Paul discusses at length the problem of public worship in the 14th chapter. Believers may experience more in their hearts than they are able to communicate intelligently in public expression. There always must be more inside than comes out, or what comes out does not amount to much. Paul urges believers to refrain from public actions which are not meaningful to others present. Believers should be concerned about the one that believeth not or is unlearned, who may come into the public meeting. They should avoid any public procedures that would give, outsiders any ground to criticize their common sense.

Public Worship

Do you realize that the way anything is done makes a difference?

Worship has two aspects, an inner experience and an outer conduct. This is like human love felt in the heart, shown in actions. The inner experience is naturally an individual matter of personal response. From the heart of the believer, saved by the grace of God through Christ Jesus, emerges adoration. In response to the beauty of holiness comes exaltation. As the soul esteems God above all else, there is homage. As the person submits to God as sovereign, one finds obedience. In commitment to do His will, there will be service. All this is action guided by the will of God. These principles will be present in any conduct of that individual.

The outer conduct is naturally a group matter of public response. Here there is wide variation in form. Some groups prefer to allow their conduct to be spontaneous. This seems to have been the case in the church at Corinth where Paul guided them in this connection. Paul wrote:

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:26-33).

Here it would appear that among them, the church at Corinth, some control was advised to avoid confusion. Some groups prefer a structured program which we commonly call a ritual. There can be varying degrees of formality. In some cases the entire public program is closely structured so that the words themselves, as in the songs, so in the prayers, are specifically authorized. They are written out for

these people. The worshippers just follow them.

This trend to formally organize public worship is seen also in the establishing of a church calendar, even to the selection of sermon topics and Scripture portions to be used on given Sundays during the year. Both strength and weakness can be seen in each of these different procedures. Spontaneous conduct seems to challenge individual responsibility and encourages personal participation. At the same time it can be tempted into exhibitionism. And because it is so individual in character it can promote pride and self righteousness. Authorized rituals seem to guarantee balanced attention to all aspects of proper response to all features of the revelation of God in the Gospel.

Many churches such as Reformed, Presbyterian, Methodist and other such communions have an order of worship which is used to guide public worship. This program recognizes and respects individual freedom in personal inner response as moved by the Holy Spirit. Care is taken not to bind the conscience by any requirement or constraint. This is a very satisfying arrangement when you stop to think about it. So far as the individual member of the congregation is concerned, there is no restriction upon his personal response to the reality of God. At the same time the importance of control over conduct in public worship is realized. Thus guidelines are given that will guide the congregation in their public activity of worship.

The Bible does not describe any stated order of worship activities. If you go into a certain church and receive a bulletin that gives you the order of worship for the day that was not copied from anyplace in the Bible. Generally the church delegates responsibility for planning the order of worship to the pastor and the church officers. That program as it is outlined can be varied under the direction of the pastor and the officers working together. It is not a loose matter that can be done any way that the pastor wishes. Any pastor is wise who follows the judgment of his officers in what would seem to be fitting in that particular congregation. The form will vary in various congregations.

The order of worship may vary. Certain days in the year and certain times in the year may mean that the order of worship will be altered. But generally speaking there will be a standard procedure.

Not all the possible features of the order of worship are stipulated, but certain items are designated as being proper for inclusion in the judgment of the pastor and the officers. There should be music and singing of hymns, psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. There should be prayer. In the formal worship of the congregation prayer is offered by the pastor or the preacher of the day, but it may be offered by any other authorized person. The reading of the Scripture, the preaching of the Word of God, the making of offerings and the celebration of the sacraments: all these should be included. That does not mean those are the only things that are to be included. Some particular Sunday at some particular worship service it may be felt that there are other items that should be included: and by the judgment of the pastor and the officers these can be included. The order of worship also designates that it is a proper thing to include what we commonly call the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that the Lord taught His disciples, in this public worship.

Personally I had difficulty in accepting the constraint of a published order of service as it would appear in the printed bulletin. I was not born a preacher, just as I was not born a Christian. I became a believer when I was a grown man. Then some time later to my great surprise I was called into the ministry. When I did take up the responsibility of being a pastor I resolved in my heart that I was going to be genuine. I had remembered how many, many times I had felt that the routine procedures in the church services were not sincere; that is to say, they were not genuine. People just went through with them. I had in mind the way they sang hymns: singing the words but not meaning them, that kind of thing. I had a sense of unhappiness, very, very definite.

I was disturbed by the fact that everybody knew that the church service would begin with the invocation: everybody knew they would then sing a song. Everybody knew the pastor would then pray. Everybody knew that they would then probably sing another song. And then after that there would be the pastoral prayer, which we commonly call the long prayer. After that they would sing another song. Then there would be the announcements. Then the deacons would take up the offering. Then sometimes the choir would sing. All this of course was all stereotyped. It was all printed out and planned out. Then after that the pastor would get up and preach. Then there would be a closing hymn and after that would be the benediction. Everything seemed so cut and dried.

In my spirit I just rebelled against it. I did not see how I was going to do it. Yet I did not feel free to make any big changes. Because of all this I made it a matter of personal prayer. You know what I found out? The Lord gave me to understand: if you want this church service to be warm, if you want this church service to be real; pray about it. Set it on fire in prayer. When you offer that invocation, mean it. When you pray, mean it. When you pronounce the benediction, mean it. Mean everything you do, and the people will be blessed. I was led to realize fortunately the wisdom and the necessity of an orderly program, and to recognize the responsibility that I had as a pastor to make it meaningful by prayer.

The Meaning of Easter

Can you understand why the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is so very important to the believer in Christ?

Worship occurs during contemplation, when the total attention of the soul is focused upon the reality of God in Christ Jesus. Souls that have not received the Gospel may be impressed by the natural creation. They can look out at the stars because we read, "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). And thus such souls may worship Him as Creator, Sustainer, Sovereign and Judge, from all that they can see in the natural creation. But they cannot know Him as Father. We read, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matthew 11:27). And then again, "Philip saith unto him, Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." And then again, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Looking at Jesus Christ we can see God.

We remember that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God become incarnate. The Word was made flesh so that we could actually see it, handle it, and feel it, and know it: in that way we could come to know God. But there is no physical description that the believer can see if he is going to think about Jesus Christ. There is no personal likeness presented in Scripture. Not even His appearance is described. The one act most carefully recorded in each of the four Gospels is His death on Calvary's cross. His burial, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven.

This then is what the believer is to look upon in contemplation. If he will but look he will be saved, and if will gaze upon that truth, he will be sanctified.

Paul discussed the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the 15th chapter of I Corinthians. He did not do this to emphasize that Christ Jesus rose from the dead: that could have been said in one sentence. But he did this to show what the resurrection of Jesus Christ means to the believer in the believer's own life and career.

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?
Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die (I Corinthians 13:35-36)

This brings to our minds something very profound: to share in the resurrection one must share in death. This is the crucial point. It is right here that the separation among worshippers takes place. If anyone is not willing to die, he cannot expect to be raised in the newness of life. The dying that he does is that in which he denies himself unto death: this is the prerequisite. I must be willing to give in, and to give up, and to give myself over into the will of God even unto death, that I might be raised from the dead in the newness of life.

And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body (I Corinthians 15:37-38).

I can remember when I was studying in a class that was led by Dr. R. A. Torrey, in which we were going over this very passage. Dr. Torrey used a phrase that I have never forgotten, and I cannot improve on it. He said this, "The body that was raised was the same body that hung on the cross, but the body was not the same." Can you follow that? When we talk about our resurrection the body that will be raised will be our same body, but the body will not be the same. This need not disturb anyone. It can be a basis of gladness. When you are thinking about someone who is blind in this world, do you expect him to be blind in the resurrection? If you know somebody that was lame or crippled, a one-legged man who has lived for 30 or 40 years with one leg and crutches, do you think he is going to have one leg and crutches in the resurrection? Every now and again we get letters from our listeners that tell us of long illnesses. A man wrote me the other day and he said he had been sick for 35 years. Well when he is raised from the dead do you think he is going to have a sick body? Now you know that is not true. You know he will not be blind, he will not be lame, he will not be sick and that is because the very composition of the body will be different.

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory (I Corinthians 15:39-41).

Not all bodies are alike and this means there is a different kind of body at the time of the resurrection. This will be in God's plan. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness: it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body (I Corinthians 15:42-44).

There is a natural body that is the one that you and I walk around in in this world; and there is a spiritual body, those who are raised from the dead will have a body that is different in composition. The spiritual body will be actual, it will be real. It will actually be a body which you could handle. But it will be different in composition and different in properties. It will not be limited to time and space. It can move from here to there quicker than thought.

And so it is written. The first man Adam was a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit, Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (I Corinthians 15:45-49).

Can you feel that? In the spiritual body we shall be like our heavenly Father. We will not be as we are now. We will be as He is. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). I almost feel like saying that when I read and listen to preachers and teachers, I have the feeling that many, many people probably never read this which comes next in verse 50: "Now this I say, brethern, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." How many times have you heard young people called upon to "build the kingdom of God!" The challenge is sent out to all young people to get together and build the kingdom of God. In their natural state they cannot even enter the kingdom of God. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." No natural person can ever share in the blessing of the Gospel. Actually the truth is very simple: they must be born again.

Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory (Corinthians 15:51-55)?

That is the way it is going to happen. The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. We shall all be changed. This is the basic thrust of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you believe in Him, you are going to be different. And it is gazing upon this profound truth revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ that will arouse the response in worship that will lead the believer into victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Worship on the Lord's Day

Are you sure you understand what the Sabbath meant?

Worship occurs in the experience of a person as he contemplates some aspect of the reality of God. The worshipper focuses his attention upon God and gazes upon the beauty of holiness as the truth of God has been revealed to him. However it is worth remembering no man hath seen God at any time. So the worshipper looks at God's handiwork in nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." He also sees the power of God's overruling providence in the affairs of men. As the worshipper contemplates God as the Creator, as the Sustainer, the Keeper, and as the Sovereign in all human affairs, he realizes also that God is Judge of all the earth. His eyelids try the children of men. "Thou God seest me." God is holy and of purer eyes than to behold evil.

The revelation of God reveals His judgment upon sin. The soul that sinneth it shall die. But God is

righteous. In judgment God will remember mercy. He will not utterly destroy. The judgment of God was manifested in a curse upon man.

. . . cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field: in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread (Genesis 3:17-19).

Man was to live by working under hardship. Man was doomed to hard labor as long as he lived. All of this is in the truth of God.

But the grace of God pointed forward to a time when the curse would be lifted. In due time the Gospel would be revealed with a gracious call to the children of men from the Son of God.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, And learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

The Sabbath became a symbol of promised rest. The curse doomed man to hard labor and to eventual destruction. The grace of God provided each seventh day rest from labor when no work was to be done. So we read in Hebrews 4:1-11 such statements as this: "And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." And then again, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." That passage concludes with the statement, "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

In due time the observance of the Sabbath was included in the law of God revealed to Moses in the Ten Words on Mount Sinai. In the course of history by the time of the coming of Jesus of Nazareth the idea of the Sabbath was emphasized in many customs, regulations and rules. Jesus of Nazareth became notorious to some Jews because He taught the Sabbath was made for man. The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth occurred on the first day of the week. This became apparently the customary day in the week when the believers gathered for public worship. In Revelation 1:10 this is called the Lord's Day. In more recent times it has been called Sunday. It is also remembered as the first day of the week and is spoken of even now as the Lord's Day. To hold the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath is the custom of the Jews to this day. Whereas to observe the first day of the week as the Lord's Day is the custom of the Christians.

Some sincere Christians feel that they should observe the seventh day, Saturday, as the Sabbath, making it a day of rest. A great majority of Christians consider the first day of the week as the Lord's Day. Many observe it as the day of rest. Actually when one considers this difference in the two cultures, one is impressed with how fitting this is. So far as the Jew is concerned, he seeks to do right in the sight of God and of course he fails because he is human. So by the end of the week he will come to confess his sins to Almighty God. The believer in Christ begins with turning to Christ, depending on the Lord, and in newness of life he steps out and in the strength of what he receives from the Lord he lives the six days of the week. So you actually have the case of the Jew who lives the six days of the week the best he can and confesses to God on the seventh day that he needs forgiveness. You have the believer who puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and receives grace from the Lord Jesus Christ, then goes out in the strength of that and lives the six days of the week following. The difference between these two points of view is not really as great as it sounds. Both set aside one day in seven to worship the one God

in the name of the one Son, and all witness to the blessing of the one Holy Spirit.

The cultural heritage of the Presbyterian Church as inherited from Scotland tended to make Sabbath observance a strict control of personal activity. Whereas the cultural heritage of Protestant Churches received from the Continent of Europe allowed more personal liberty in conduct. In the course of time and in response to increasing complexity of social and economic factors in every community, the observance of the first day in the week as the Lord's Day has become progressively a personal matter, of individual preference and choice. However, this development has not occurred without serious dangers.

Actually the setting aside of one day in seven in which to break the routine of work, to give special time to the public worship of God, has been notably blessed, in the life of believers. There is no question about this. It makes a difference in the individual person when he respects the Lord's Day and regards it as something special, making a difference on the Lord's Day. Just as it is true for the individual, so it is certainly true in the family. It is certainly true in the home. Wherever you see a family that respects the Lord's Day you may look for certain other blessings. And if you see a family that neglects the Lord's Day they will be without those blessings.

Respecting and regarding the Lord's Day as set aside in the will of God is effectual, both in the personal experience of believers, and in the public witness in the community. Everybody knows what a difference it makes when you notice whether your neighbors go to church or whether they do not go to church. So far as any particular man is concerned, if he makes a practice of washing his car on the Lord's Day, he would have a hard time persuading anybody in that block that he is a believer in Almighty God. It is a very, very significant testimony among all people.

This is one of the most significant means there is in nurturing the concept of God in the mind of a young child. Take any young child in any home and have that young child learn that there is one day in seven when everything is different, when things are done differently, that child soon picks up the idea of something special. This is true especially if the family is careful that on that day it does not make purchases. On that day it does not go into various activities that the public follows through on Sunday. And if you have a family that refrains from doing such things children notice that very, very much. That child may later turn away from God, but the awareness of the reality of God will be definite in the life of that child forever.

There is a certain blessing upon it and this is what we need to keep in mind when we are thinking about this whole matter of worship. So far as considering God is concerned and thinking about God, observing that one day in seven will make a difference in any person's conduct. He will change his routine. He will allow time for the worship of God, and time for his own private meditation and contemplation, as well as rest from his labors. This is very, very important in the life of people, and God blesses it in their hearts.

The Meaning of the Lord's Supper

Can you understand that the most important truth in the Gospel is that Christ Jesus died for you that you might be saved?

The worship of God by a believer in Christ Jesus is grounded in his faith. The faith of the believer is the consequence of what he has heard about God through the Scriptures which reveal the Gospel. Such as "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). While Jesus of Nazareth was with His disciples, they could touch Him and see Him. But after he was gone, His followers had to depend on their

memories which could become vague and distorted. By way of helping them to keep in mind accurately the distinctive thrust of the Gospel, Jesus of Nazareth instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This is the one structured ceremony that helps all believers have in mind the authorized significance of what Christ Jesus did, does, and will do to save their souls.

The focus of attention in the Lord's Supper is on Christ's death on the cross for us. "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." His manner of going to the cross can be an example for us as is indicated in I Peter 2:20-24. But Calvary was His work by which He reconciles believers to God. Believers are never to forget that they are bought with the precious blood of the Lamb.

The celebration of the sacrament is to be done by individuals meeting together in fellowship, even as it was done at the Last Supper. Though their participation was in fellowship with each other, the actual performance was by each individual by himself. "Take, eat" is done only by individuals. The bread goes into the mouth and down the throat of one person at a time. Drinking the cup was to be done by all, but the wine would go down the throat of an individual. At the Last Supper the Lord dealt with His apostles as individuals saying, "One of you shall betray me." His apostles responded as individuals saying, "Lord, is it I?" This points up the truth that in response to the revelation of God in Christ, the believer worships God in himself as an individual when he partakes in the Lord's Supper.

Paul discusses the observance of the Lord's Supper by the Corinthian congregation in I Corinthians 11:17-34. We learn much from the things that Paul stresses.

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you (I Corinthians 11:17-19).

In these verses it is evident that the Apostle Paul took note of a blemish in that congregation. Something was not as it should be. Communion among the members of the congregation with each other was marred by division because of heresy.

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not (I Corinthians 11:20-22).

Here the Apostle Paul drew attention to the fact that fellowship in the congregation was hindered by the personal lack of consideration for others. Each one was doing as he pleased. That meant that some people who had more means actually would eat sumptuously, while others in bringing their own food doubtless had very little. This would show an inequality in the group and would destroy that feeling of fellowship that they were to have.

In the passage beginning with verse 23 we find how the practice of the Lord's Supper was to be performed. Here Paul outlined the procedures which should be followed in performing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In the course of time variations in details have developed in different denominations,

but the general pattern as set forth here by Paul has prevailed among all believers. Today whenever believers meet together to have this sacrament of the Lord's Supper they have the equivalent of the bread and the wine, which are dispensed so that each one may participate.

In I Corinthians 11:23-26 Paul outlines the procedure which should be followed in performing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

In the course of time variations in details have developed in different denominations, but the general pattern as set forth here by Paul has prevailed among all believers.

Now there is another matter brought up. Here we read a rather stern word.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged (I Corinthians 11:27-31).

Personal integrity of the worshipper in partaking of the sacrament is very important.

It was at the Last Supper that Jesus of Nazareth raised the question of personal loyalty. Apparently the heart attitudes of the persons in the fellowship of the believers can change. This was the case with Judas Iscariot. There is need for self examination. We need to ask the Lord. "Is it I?" Apparently it is possible that the response of the individual in his personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of his life can falter. Sharing in the sacrament should be reserved for persons who have esteemed God above all else or anybody else, and who have exalted Him to be the Lord of that person's conduct.

Partaking of the elements of the bread and wine is understood to be a declaration of heartfelt obedience to the living will of the living Lord. When a person is not wholly committed to obey Jesus Christ as Lord, he is unworthy to eat the bread and to drink the cup. If he should then partake of the sacrament, he "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Such a person would be counted as having acted falsely, and should expect to be judged by God as having sinned against God. Paul emphasizes that if the believer would judge his own heart attitude toward the Lord, he could expect God to be gracious in forgiving him and accepting him. But if the believer who has become cool in his personal attitude toward Christ does not confess his sins he will be condemned with the world. Apparently there is a direct connection between loss of faith toward Christ Jesus and lack of fellowship between believers. For this reason believers should come to the Lord's Supper in humble contrite fashion because repentance and self denial are the required qualifications for acceptable partaking of the sacrament. And so in our meditation we have seen that in the performance or the practice of the

sacrament of the Lord's Supper the believer is actually worshipping God in remembering the truth of the death of Jesus Christ until He comes.

The Meaning of Baptism

Do you understand what the Bible means by baptism?

The worship of God is inspired in contemplation of what has been revealed about God. In the Gospel is revealed this wonderful truth. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The salvation of the soul involves repentance on his part, reconciliation with God, deliverance from sin, commitment to God, communion with God, forsaking sin, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and obedience to God. All that is included in the salvation of the soul.

All effort to achieve this in one's own wisdom and strength will fail. The only person who ever accomplished this was Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Gospel tells how Christ Jesus came into the world to do this very thing, to live this way on our behalf. Because He did it, because He was able to live this way and was blessed of His heavenly Father, all believers can share eternal life to the glory of God.

Jesus Christ was made flesh, was born of a woman, being made in all points like as we are yet without sin that he might be a substitution for me. He lived in my situation that I might live in His situation. In His death on Calvary's cross He was my substitution, my substitutionary sacrifice. He died in my place that I might be forgiven and be reconciled to God. I will be forgiven and reconciled to God in Him and through Him.

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians 4:4-5).

At this point we face the prime mystery in salvation. Right here is the biggest thing that happened in all salvation experience. Somehow by the grace of God a sinner can commit himself in faith to Jesus Christ to be identified with Him. Thus he becomes the heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ. As husband and wife are joined, as the Scripture says, "And they two shall be one flesh," even so Christ and the church are joined, as in Ephesians 5:31-32. Something like this happens when two companies in business merge. If one is wealthy and the other is bankrupt, when they are merged, all debts are paid, all assets are shared. This union between the repentant sinner and the gracious Savior begins at Calvary and leads into heaven and glory. It becomes actual because of the faith of the believer and the grace of Jesus Christ. Thus the believer is delivered from guilt and from the power of sin and has fellowship with God as his heavenly Father.

To realize all this is true moves the believer to experience all the aspects of genuine worship. He adores the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. He exalts the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Corinthians 8:9). He submits himself to accept Jesus as Lord and is minded to serve the Lord in any and every way he can. This is salvation and salvation is of God. The Lord is my salvation. For a believer to be blessed God must come to be with the believer, but God comes only to the willing soul. Christ does not force His way in.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Revelation 3:20).

This event of coming to the Lord, of receiving God into the soul, and of yielding to submit to the indwelling Christ in loving obedience, was symbolized in the days of Jesus Christ by the sacrament of baptism. This ceremony dramatized the truth that God did something to the believer. God came to be with the believer forever. The believer would never be the same.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Corinthians 5:17).

In the history of the church the significance of this sacrament has been variously emphasized. Early in the church's history baptism was largely seen as a profession of faith in Christ Jesus. Sacrament was openly celebrated before all the world and served notice to everyone that the baptized person was to be counted among those who professed faith in Christ. Baptism was understood as a confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in the eyes of the world.

At the same time believers understood that when a person accepted Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord, a union took place as the Son of God and the believer were joined as one. In this union several blessed events took place. The sins of the believer were taken away in the death of Christ. The believer was cleansed, being washed in the blood of the Lamb. The creative power of God regenerated the believer as a newborn child of God. The Holy Spirit was given to the believer to show him, to lead him and to comfort him. Now I have put that very briefly and I have said it in just so many words but it invokes everything that is involved in being a believer in Christ Jesus.

In this union when the believer and Christ Jesus are joined as one, several blessed events take place. The sins of the believer are taken away in the death of Christ. This is something every believing person should call upon himself to keep in mind and to really take hold of: his sins are gone, gone! No matter what they are, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). Christ Jesus died for his sins. He took them away. The sins of the believer are taken away in the death of Christ.

The believer is cleansed, being washed in the blood of the Lamb. There are no stains of the past. There may be memories of the past, and those memories may be troubling him or haunting him. But he can afford to forget them, he can forget the things that are behind. The believer is cleansed in the sight of God, being washed in the blood of the Lamb.

The creative power of God regenerates the believer as a newborn child of God. Something actually takes place in that believer. He will never be the same again. He is born again. The Holy Spirit is then given to the believer to show him, to lead him and to comfort him. This special emphasis should help to keep this marvelous truth with every believer. Outsiders, the unbelievers, do not realize those things. All they see in the sacrament of baptism is that that person professed to the world that he or she believed in Jesus Christ. That is all the outside world knows.

The sacrament of baptism celebrated this significant event of being joined with Christ. The ceremony takes place at one point in time but the reality which this ceremony symbolized would never end. Just as the call of the Gospel would come and could be received at one time, so the grace of God would continue to come and to be received with ever more growth and understanding and faith in the living Lord.

Despite all the attention given in church history to the mode of ceremonial baptism, it would seem

from Scripture that the ceremony itself was not to be taken as so necessary or so important. The Scripture records Jesus Himself baptized not. And Paul wrote to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 1:14-17 various things among which he said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."

But the spiritual reality of deliberate commitment to Christ which the ceremony of baptism celebrates is absolutely essential. The bride must belong to the bridegroom. With reference to this whole matter of confessing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Paul would say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."