

## **SHARED WORSHIP – Part 3**

### **Introduction**

Our shared worship on Sunday mornings is a supernatural event. It takes the grace, the mercy and the power of God in His Church to truly worship Him. Do we worship God in a way that depends solely on His grace? Could we do the same thing, every Sunday, without the presence of God? We sing these words under various song titles: Lord, we need you, oh how we need you. I wonder if we all realize how much we need the risen Christ in order to share worship?

Charles Spurgeon preached these words in 1890, and they are still relevant today:

“Is not our repentance, after all, but poor stuff compared with what it ought to be? Is not unbelief mixed with our faith? Has not our love a measure of lukewarmness in it? Did you ever sing unto the Lord with pure, reverent praise—and without there being some forgetfulness of the God to whom you sang? I have never prayed a prayer, yet, with which I have felt content. From my first prayer till now I have need of grace to cover my shortcomings at the mercy seat. No act of consecration, no act of self-sacrifice, no rapture of fellowship, no height of spirituality has been without its imperfection!”<sup>1</sup>

Without the present ministry of Jesus Christ, we cannot attempt to share worship together.

### **#1. Jesus is our High Priest.**

I ended the message last Sunday with this thought. Now I need to expand upon it. It's taken from Hebrews 9.

*“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption . . . For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”* (Hebrews 9:11–12, 24 ESV)

The Old Testament high priest was a sinner. The Old Testament sacrifices could not, in themselves, forgive sin (Hebrews 10:4). The Old Testament sacrifices had to be offered continually and could not “perfect those who draw near” (10:1). What a difference Jesus made. By one sacrifice Christ has obtained the “eternal redemption” (9:12) for those who believe in Him. This same Jesus appears before the presence of a holy God “on our behalf” (9:24). And then we read these awesome words:

*“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”* (Hebrews 9:14, ESV)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols34-36/chs2153.pdf>

Do you see that? The blood of Christ does something that enables the Believer to “serve the living God.” That Greek word λατρεύω [lat·ryoo·o] means to serve, minister, offer worship, discharge a sacred office, etc.<sup>2</sup> The blood purifies our conscience from dead works. What does that mean? The Old Testament worshipper could not have their conscience, that faculty that attributes guilt, removed through legal sacrifices. But because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice, when the Holy Spirit of God applies that to our hearts and we appropriate that by faith alone, “. . . our sense of guilt is removed, peace is communicated, and we are enabled to approach God not only without dread, but as joyous worshippers.”<sup>3</sup>

The verb to “purify” is future. You could say, the blood of Christ will continue to purify.” Andrae Crouch picked up this thought in his song, “The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power”<sup>4</sup>:

*It soothes my doubt and calms my fears  
And it dries all my tears  
The blood that gives me strength  
From day to day  
It will never lose its pow'r*

As did the high priest of old, we enter into the Holy of holies because we see the blood of Christ soothing our conscience enabling us to worship Him.

## #2. Jesus is our Advocate

The Apostle John, in 1 John 2:1 (ESV), writes these words:

*“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”*

Our English translations employ the word “advocate”. Jesus is our Advocate. The Greek word in the New Testament is παράκλητος [par·ak·lay·tos]. It can be defined as a lawyer, a defense attorney. He is one who pleads another’s cause; pleading with God the Father for the pardon of our sins.

John will write in verse 2 that Christ’s plea is based on “propitiation”, or in other words the fact that the sin of all those who believe has been legally and judicially satisfied before God. Paul tells us the same thing:

*“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” (Romans 8:33–34, ESV)*

<sup>2</sup> Strong, J. (1995). [Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon](#). Woodside Bible Fellowship.

<sup>3</sup> Pink, A. W. (2000). [An Exposition of Hebrews](#) (electronic ed., p. 493). Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group.

<sup>4</sup> Andrae Crouch, © 1966 Manna Music, Inc. (Admin. by ClearBox Rights, LLC)

What happens when charges are laid in the courtroom of Heaven against God's elect? Answer: Our Advocate steps forward and reminds the Court, "These charges are disallowed. The charges are true. But the penalty has been paid. Divine justice has been achieved. My blood has covered this sin."

Just think of these implications for shared worship. We have a **παράκλητος** [par·ak·lay·tos], the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17) in us; and we have a **παράκλητος** [par·ak·lay·tos] in Heaven representing us. Wow!

Lastly and certainly as encouraging is that Christ perfects our imperfect worship.

### #3. Christ is perfecting our worship.

Our worship, even at its best, is infiltrated with flesh and selfish motives. Even our most holy worship still needs cleansing. Turn with me to as we read the duties of the high priest, Aaron, in Exodus 28:35–38 (ESV),

*<sup>35</sup> And it shall be on Aaron when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the Holy Place before the Lord, and when he comes out, so that he does not die. <sup>36</sup> "You shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, 'Holy to the Lord.' <sup>37</sup> And you shall fasten it on the turban by a cord of blue. It shall be on the front of the turban. <sup>38</sup> It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear any guilt from the holy things that the people of Israel consecrate as their holy gifts. It shall regularly be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.*

These verses describe how Aaron the high priest is to enter the Holy of holies. Aaron is a type of Christ. The duties and responsibilities as described are a shadow or a sign pointing to our greater High Priest. Do you notice that on Aaron's forehead is a signet reading "Holy to the Lord"? What is the purpose of that signet? Answer: It acknowledges that when God's people offer their worship, even in these holy endeavors, there is imperfection and sin. The high priest makes sacrifice for those sins, so that the worship would be "accepted before the Lord."

Spurgeon said, "Aaron in his glorious attire was the type of the living Christ who presented unto God the sacrifices of His people. Their faults in worship and fellowship he is made to bear and so their gifts and prayers are accepted before a holy God. Remember of what we are now speaking—not about the way of bringing the guilty sinner, at first, near to God, for that is by the blood alone—but the way of rendering the pardoned one continually acceptable to God in his daily service of thanksgiving, prayer, praise, labor and consecrated substance which he gladly brings to the Most High."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols34-36/chs2153.pdf>

The late Jerry Bridges, wrote, “Even our tears of repentance need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb.”<sup>6</sup> Our best worship, our best praying, our best serving, our best preaching, our best singing, our best *whatever*, can never earn us access to the Father. The writer tells us how to worship:

*“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.”* (Hebrews 13:15, ESV)

It is as we live and offer sacrifices of praise THROUGH HIM, He causes them to be acceptable. Therefore, we can take no credit for even our best, for our best is impaired by sin.

## Application

The only way that we have hope of offering worship to a holy God is through the person of Jesus. The only confidence we have of approaching a holy God in worship is that we have a Friend in Heaven. As I conclude this short series on Shared Worship let’s conclude with a reminder of some things we need to consider as we anticipate gathering on Sunday mornings:

1. Shared worship is a response to our Father’s invitation. It is not common, nor casual.
2. Shared worship is primarily about extolling the glory of God in the face of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Shared worship exists when heart preparation is real. God draws near to the humble and the broken.
4. Shared worship is only experienced through the present ministry of Jesus Christ.

## Implications

The implications of this are many, but here are a few that I discern are needed to be said in our assembly.

- #1. God is here, by His Holy Spirit. Are we? Is our mind’s attention and heart’s affection on the Lord Jesus Christ? Therefore, we come prepared. Therefore, we seek to remove distractions.
- #2. The ongoing and eternal theme of worship is the Gospel. We gather to “behold” the Gospel. Other topics and elements may be good, but they are subservient to the glory of God in the work of Christ Jesus.
- #3. Worship is only worship when it comes via the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. This means that worship is the distinct privilege of the redeemed in Christ. This means there is no such thing as inter-faith worship. This means that worship does not occur ecumenically if there are participants who deny justification by faith alone and the necessity of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
- #4. Lastly, worship is the one activity that will endure for eternity. Shared worship is not irrelevant. It is not optional.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/507190-even-our-tears-of-repentance-need-to-be-washed-in>