

58-13-03.wpd --The Path of True Worship
false teaching, Communion,
Heb 13:9-16
Right faith leads to right worship.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture Reading)

--"If you are asked the question, "Where do you worship?" you might answer, "At EVCC." But hopefully you could also add, "That's just one place I worship. Actually I worship wherever I am." It's important to have that concept, because worship really comes out of our attitude of faith in God. The more important question is, "What do you believe about worship?" Christians ought to be able to answer that question the same way the author of Hebrews does in today's text. **HOM.idea.**

I. Christian Worship is Grace-Based, v.9

- A. Humans have a tendency to get "carried away" with novelty (v.9a, "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.") [advertisement agencies know this and try to "carry away" our money with the latest "new and improved" products.]
1. The danger of "all kinds of strange teachings" is described by the word "strange" ["foreign"], because they are foreign to the Gospel-- Gal 1:6-7, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.
 2. Teachings foreign to the Gospel are "really no gospel at all" [no "good news"], because once God gave His Son, the best had arrived (v.8, preceding this, says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever," making the Good News about Christ both changeless and contemporary: it is forever good and forever new. If it needs additions or alterations, it would cease to be the "good news.")
- B. Humans, wanting to "get it right" in worship, often succumb to the peer pressure of accepted rules and regulations
1. External customs and rituals (whether in *food, dress, holy days, body postures, types of music*, etc.) may accompany worship, but they have no divine power to change us spiritually--v.9b, "It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them."
 2. Worshipping God, with a grace-based faith, should change and

strengthen our hearts (Grace has two closely related meanings: gift and gratitude. God favors us with *gifts of grace*, and we render grace back to God as *thanksgiving*)-- Heb 12:28 (NRSV), Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give **thanks** [lit, "let us have **grace**"], by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

TRANS: Do you see how relational grace is? **Right faith**, grace-based faith, **leads to right worship**. Worship that pleases God must be solidly based on the *grace of God* and our *gratitude* back to Him. What else should we believe about worship?

II. Christian Worship is Cross-Centered, v.10-13

- A. The center of Christian worship is the Communion Table (v.10, "We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat."), because it represents our faith in the work of the Cross.
1. As a *ceremonial meal*, it has the potential of becoming a ritualistic practice instead of a *relational participation*.
 2. 3 attitudes prevent this (contained in 3 names for the Meal):
 - a. *The Lord's Supper*, a *banquet* to which we're personally invited
 - b. *The Eucharist*, an act of our own *thanksgiving* for His Cross
 - c. *Holy Communion*, an intimate *fellowship* with Him
- B. (**re-read v.11-13**) Christ's sacrificial work on the Cross was done beyond the boundaries of religion ("*outside the city gate*"), because God's intention was for it to have a boundless effect in the world.
- C. The Cross was "*outside the city gate*" also because the city rejected Christ, a rejection we share in joining ourselves to Him by faith.

TRANS: Faith in what Jesus accomplished on the Cross carries with it a stigma today, even as it did in the early church. Some people do not see sin the way a Holy God does, so they do not feel a need for a Savior from sin. But those who come to the Cross, first become aware that we humans DO HAVE a sin problem, and then realize that we are helpless in ridding ourselves from sin. We need the intervention of God's grace, which is what the Cross is all about. Our worship is not only based in that grace, but its central focus is the Cross where that grace was made available through faith. This is the **right faith**, *Gospel faith*, **that leads to the right worship**, *Gospel worship*. But there is more...

III. Christian Worship is Kingdom-Focused, v.14-16

- A. Christians are often chided for "*having their heads in the clouds*," but the opposite is true. All of life in this world is like a cloud--James 4:14b, "a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."
1. Christians are perhaps the most honest realists, because they acknowledge that (v.14a) "*here we do not have an enduring city*."
 2. When unbelieving realists acknowledge the instability of life, they often become cynical pessimists, "*but we*" (v.14b) "*are looking for the city that is to come*" and for the King who is bringing it to us.
- B. In anticipation of Christ's coming Reign, we praise His name (v.15, *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name.*)
1. This is praising by faith, because we are anticipating the future.
 2. It is a continual praise, a form of worship beyond church walls.
 3. It is the worship-work of the priesthood of believers, a spiritual fulfillment of the OT sacrificial worship. (By grace, God gave Himself as the offering on the altar, and our only right response is thankful [grace-full] praise from our lips.)
- C. BUT praising God with our lips is not a substitute for praising God with our lives through service-- v.16, *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.* (Kingdom-faithful people are servants of the King, and we use our bodies in this world, as Christ did, "to do good" and to serve others--Rom 12:1. Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

CONCLUSION:

--**Right faith leads to right worship**, worship that pleases God. It is *grace-based, Cross-centered, and Kingdom-focused*. In one word, it is the worship of Jesus, our *crucified King of grace*. May His name be praised forever!

Heb 13:9-16 (NIV) Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. {10} We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. {11} The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. {12} And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. {13} Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. {14} For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. {15} Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name. {16} And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.