

# WORSHIP

The Christian's Highest Occupation

Alfred P. Gibbs

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### THE HINDRANCES TO WORSHIP

#### 5. IMPATIENCE

By this is meant the believer's failure to wait for God and upon God. This, of course, is the opposite of the former hindrances of self will and slothfulness. We are naturally creatures of extremes and quickly swing, like a pendulum, from one side to the other.

While we must avoid the danger of lagging behind God, we must also beware of rushing ahead of Him. There is not only a time when we must be up and doing, but also a period when it is essential that we "**rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him**" (Psalm 37:7).

There is a verse of Scripture which combines to reveal the two-fold danger of these extremes of impatience and slothfulness. It reads: "**Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding**" (Psalm 32:9).

The horse is noted for its spirit of impetuosity. Without any thought of the consequences ahead, it "**rusheth into the battle**" (Jeremiah 8:6).

The mule is famous for its stubborn inertia. The mule draws back when it is urged to go on. God wants neither extreme in His people. He has promised: "**I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye**" (Psalm 32:8).

The sad case of King Saul will furnish us with an illustration of how impatience can hinder worship. The prophet Samuel had anointed Saul as king over Israel, and prophesied that the Spirit of the Lord should come upon him, that he should prophesy, and that God should turn him into another man (I Samuel 10:1-13).

Then Samuel gave Saul definite instructions regarding his future actions and said: "**And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do**" (v. 8).

Thus instructed, Saul returned to his home, and the signs which Samuel had foretold came to pass.

In Chapter 13 we find Saul at Gilgal, waiting impatiently for the coming of Samuel, while the Philistines gathered together to attack the Israelites. Instead of waiting for Samuel to appear, to do what only he could do as a priest unto God, Saul, in his impatience and impetuosity, commanded his servant to bring him the burnt offering and the peace offerings, and he offered them to God.

Scarcely had he completed the task, which he had absolutely no right or authority to perform, than Samuel appeared and inquired the reason for his act. Saul replied that he saw the people of Israel were scattered from him, and that the Philistines seemed about to attack him, and that Samuel had not yet come to him, and ended by saying: **“I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering”** (I Samuel 13:11-12).

Upon this explanation Samuel charged him with folly and disobedience and concluded: **“But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord has sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee”** (vss. 13-14).

Therefore, because of his failure to wait God’s time, and do things in accordance with God’s way, Saul was rejected for his “forced” worship. God wants no “forced” worship from his people, for worship is essentially a voluntary thing. It rises from the soul of him who waits patiently in His presence and takes time to meditate in His word.

- Saul learned, to his cost, that **“the flesh profiteth nothing”** (John 6:63).
- Saul, in his impatience, committed the folly of intruding where he did not rightly belong.
- Saul rushed ahead of God and offered that which he was not Divinely qualified to do, and consequently both merited and received Divine disapproval.

Each believer is in the same danger of trying to accomplish, in the energy of the flesh, what can only be done acceptably in the power of the Holy Spirit. That unholy and fleshly impatience, which would prompt the believer to rush unprepared into the presence of God and offer artificial worship, must be curbed and judged in the light of God’s word. He must heed the Divine injunction: **“Be still, and know that I am God”** (Psalm 46:10).

Like David, he must say to himself: **“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him”** (Psalm 62:5).

## 6. Formalism

By this is meant the substitution of scriptural simplicity and the liberty of the Spirit, for a scrupulously meticulous and exact observance of certain outward forms, rules and regulations, without the inward spiritual reality. One does not have to go far to see a demonstration of this in Christendom.

In many places, the whole meeting for “public worship” is prearranged from beginning to end and proceeds, with clocklike precision, from the opening hymn to the benediction.

- The hymns to be sung are all previously arranged.
- The prayers that are offered are all read from a book and have been composed by persons who have long since died.

To add to the confusion, in many cases, the person who conducts this “worship service” has never been born again by the Spirit of God, and is consequently “**dead in his trespasses and sins!**” What a travesty this is on the pattern given in the New Testament Scriptures!

The coming together of believers for worship in those days was marked by spirituality, simplicity, equality, liberty and spontaneity. The result was much worship and much blessing.

It all goes to demonstrate the fatal tendency of the flesh to introduce human regulations as a substitute for God’s pattern, imagining, by so doing, that the Divine plan is improved thereby!

No company of believers, however scripturally gathered, is free from this danger of drifting into formalism.

For instance: a mode of procedure is introduced which, by constant observance over a period of years, comes to be looked upon as being of Divine authority, and therefore “scriptural.”

This particular mode of procedure may be perfectly all right, but it must ever be kept distinct from what the word of God actually authorizes.

### **Ritualism can become as great a menace to worship as ritualism!**

We must beware of forcing our customs on our fellow believers, and depriving them of their “**liberty in Christ Jesus**” (Galatians 2:4).

The tendency of formality is to substitute uniformity, for unity. It seeks to produce, through its rules and regulations, what only the Spirit of God can accomplish when He is given His rightful place. Formality may produce an outward harmony and order, but it is a mechanical one, and is dependent entirely upon the strict and continued observance of the prescribed form of service.

The Holy Spirit, as He is allowed to lead the assembled saints, will produce harmony and order of a vital character. This will result in true worship ascending to God and bringing delight to His heart.

### 7. An Unforgiving Spirit

What a blighting effect this has upon the worship of an individual, or an assembly of believers!

Our Lord made a special reference to this hindrance and provided a remedy for it. He said: “**If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift**” (Matthew 5:23-24).

So long as a grudge is cherished in one's heart against a fellow believer, so long will that believer remain in darkness. So wrote John, the apostle of love (I John 2:11). He goes further and says: **"If a man say, 'I love God,' and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also"** (I John 4:20-21).

Paul's words should come home with peculiar force to each believer's heart: **"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you"** (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Well did Paul know the fatal effect an unforgiving spirit has upon worship.

**An old Christian used to say that the best way to kill a grudge in one's heart, was to pray for the person against whom the grudge was formed, and keep on praying for him until the grudge was gone!**

We must all beware lest little misunderstandings are allowed to develop into big feuds, which act as a blight upon our worship and hinder our testimony for God.

## 8. Pride

One thing is certain: worship and pride of heart are mutually exclusive, unless it be self-worship, and this is really what pride is. Pride ill becomes a child of God, or an assembly of His people; yet alas, it is often seen, and its baneful effects are only too plainly evident in the lack of spiritual worship.

- Pride is a subtle thing and often exists where it is least expected, for one can even be proud of his humility!
- Pride in one's own personal appearance leads that individual to give undue attention to himself, or herself.
- Pride of gift leads to an ostentatious display of it and a secret craving for applause.
- Pride of position leads its owner to adopt a condescending air to his fellow believers.
- Pride of possession shows itself in self-complacency and boasting.
- Pride of one's ecclesiastical position evidences itself in smugness and sanctimoniousness.

We could add to the sordid list, but enough has been said to indicate what a hindrance these forms of pride are to the worship of either an individual or an assembly. God leaves us in no doubt as to how he views pride, for we read: **"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble"** (James 4:6). The best cure for pride is to **"look unto Jesus,"** of Whom it was said He: **"made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"** (Philippians 2:7-8).

It is only as a believer, or an assembly, in true humility of spirit seeks the face of God, and contemplates the blessed Lord Jesus, that worship will be the inevitable outcome.

May we, by God's grace, see to it that none of these things shall be allowed to hinder our worship to the One who alone is worthy.

**~ end of chapter 21 ~**

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