



Offering Acceptable Worship Part 3: Reverence, Awe, and a Consuming Fire!

January 18, 2015

Text: Hebrews 12:28-29

- The first Sunday of January, we said that an area of ministry that needs some attention within CRCC is the area of holiness: our practical holiness and to a much greater degree, our LORD's infinite, perfect holiness.
- We said that we need to process our Lord's holiness as it relates to:
 1. The life of the local church: how God's **holiness** should impact how we interact with one another.
 2. The outworking of home life: how God's **holiness** should affect our homes.
 3. And our theme for January: The corporate worship of the local church...how God's **holiness** should impact our gathering.
- Our goal this Consecration is to come out of it more **reverent** and in **awe** of God, and prayerfully that change would impact our lives, our worship, and our homes!
- Last week, we said that one way to cultivate this change is to be reminded about WHO we are worshipping. He is HOLY.
- In fact, we reviewed His holiness from the perspective of:
 1. The Seventh Day being declared holy (Gen 2:3)
 2. Man being commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:15-17)
 3. The cause of the Flood, man's continual wickedness of heart (Gen 6:5-8)
 4. Man needing to see God as sanctified (Ex 19:10-12)
 5. The Law being given as a perfect and totally holy standard (Ex 20:1-17)
 6. The symbolism of the Tent of Meeting (Ex 25-40)
 7. The Holiness of God throughout Leviticus (Lev 19:2)
 8. The captivity of Israel and Judah due to practical unholiness (2 Kings 17, 2 Kings 24)
 9. The coming of Christ, the one who fulfilled complete holiness on our behalf and every Old Testament ceremonial type and shadow! (Heb 10:11-18)
 10. The incredible truth of our future glorification! (Rev 21:3-8)
- Oh, how great and awesome is our Holy God!!

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! (Psa 105:1-4 ESV)

He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name! (Psa 111:9 ESV)

For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. (Isa 54:5 ESV)

Reverence, Awe, and a Consuming Fire!

1. Our text commands Christians to be **grateful**. As a result of that gratefulness, we are to offer God acceptable worship WITH reverence and awe because our God is a consuming fire.
2. Next week, we'll offer some biblical suggestions concerning acceptable worship. Today though, let us continue to examine our own hearts.

3. Let's define the words and look at the term "consuming fire." In the process, may our Lord move our hearts to **hunger** and **thirst** for Him! ☺

Reverence

1. This word in Heb 12:28 in Greek is "aidōs" and carries the ideas of "downcast eyes, bashfulness, **modesty** or shamefacedness."
2. Like other words translated as "reverence" in Scripture, it implies, "A with fear mingled with respect and affection. The fear acceptable to God is a filial (or childlike) fear, an awful reverence of the divine nature, proceeding from a just esteem of his perfections, which produces in us an inclination to his service and an unwillingness to offend him." – Webster 1828
3. So to reverence God acceptably is to have a heart that is:
 - a. Aware of one's own sin, and is therefore not overly proud or boastful.
 - b. Modest...seeking to place all attention upon Christ in every way.
 - c. Childlike in faith and fear, simply willing to obey God.
 - d. Absolutely, positively unwilling to **offend** Him!
4. And, dear friends, our God is worthy of this sort of humble, penitent, reverence!
 - a. *Psa 2:11 ESV* Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
 - b. *Psa 89:7 ESV* a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?
 - c. *Rev 15:4 ESV* Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."
 - d. *Rev 4:8-11 ESV* And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (9) And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, (10) the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, (11) "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Awe

1. The word "awe" in our text is from the Greek, "eulabeia," which means, "caution," and carries the connotation of *reverence (piety)* and by implication *dread or fear*. Indeed, the KJV translates the term, "godly fear." Other terms associated with this word are *circumspection* and *discretion*.
2. To be *circumspect* is to be "prudent; watchful on all sides; examining **carefully** all the circumstances that may affect a determination." -Webster 1828
3. To have *discretion* is to have "that discernment which enables a person to judge critically of what is correct and **proper**." -Webster 1828
4. **Awe in our text implies a godly fear.** "In scripture, fear is used to express a filial or a slavish passion. In good men, the fear of God is a holy awe or reverence of God and his laws, which springs from a just view and real love of the divine character, leading the subjects of it to hate and shun every thing that can offend such a holy being, and inclining them to aim at perfect obedience. This is filial fear." -Webster 1828
5. When we read the word awe in ESV, we might be tempted think in modern terms, where we are so overwhelmed by something or someone that we act in a wild, outrageous manner.

6. This New Testament text encourages quite the opposite. It suggests a **circumspect passion; controlled and biblically-governed forms and expressions; hearts that are prayerfully prepared and are thinking through what honors God instead of being ruled by emotion.**
7. Emotion is by no means sinful! But remember, "*1Co 14:32-33a ESV and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. (33) For God is not a God of confusion but of peace...*
8. So then in worship we should be:
 - a. Passionate, but not out of control
 - b. Expressive, but according to Scripture
 - c. Fervent, but with a reverent fear

Our God, a Consuming Fire!

1. This sort of reverence and awe are commanded because our God is a consuming fire! Several Old Testament examples come to mind:
 - a. **Aaron's Sin Offering:** *Lev 9:24 ESV And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.*
 - b. **Nadab and Abihu's unauthorized fire:** *Lev 10:2 ESV And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.*
 - c. **Israel's grumbling and complaining after leaving Sinai:** *Num 11:1 ESV And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp.*
 - d. **The Rebellion of Korah and his men:** *Num 16:35 ESV And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men offering the incense.*
 - e. **Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal:** *1Ki 18:38 ESV Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.*
2. What do we learn from all this? That God is a God of **order**! That there is worship and conduct that is acceptable to Him, and there is worship and conduct that is NOT!
3. Of course, in Christ, we are not likely to be subject to such harsh judgment. Mathew Henry wrote on these verses:
 - a. "We cannot worship God acceptably, unless we worship him with *godly reverence and fear*. As faith, so holy fear, is necessary to acceptable worship. It is only the grace of God that enables us to worship God in a right manner: nature cannot come up to it; it can produce neither that precious faith nor that holy fear that is necessary to acceptable worship. God is the same just and righteous God under the gospel that he appeared to be under the law. Though he be our God in Christ, and now deals with us in a more kind and gracious way, yet he is in himself a consuming fire; that is, a God of strict justice, who will avenge himself on all the despisers of his grace, and upon all apostates. Under the gospel, the justice of God is displayed in a more awful manner, though not in so sensible a manner as under the law; for here we behold divine justice seizing upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and making him a propitiatory sacrifice, his soul and body an offering for sin, which is a display of justice far beyond what was seen and heard on mount Sinai when the law was given.
4. Hallelujah! Thank you Lord Jesus!
5. But what we should take away from our Text is a desire to **search** out that which pleases Him, even from a New Testament perspective. Not legalism. Not man-made ritual. Not praise that

lacks joy or worship that lacks authenticity. **But hearts that burn for Him and minds thinking through the lens of Scripture to please Him.**

Contextual Commands:

In the very next chapter, the writer of Hebrews concludes his letter with practical actions that suggest a pure, worshipful heart. The implication is that this sort of person will offer acceptable worship! This chapter is a very good checklist; think it through! 😊

1. Love one another! (Heb 13:1)
2. Be hospitable! (v2)
3. Remember the needy! (v3)
4. Protect marriage and purity! (v4)
5. Have contentment! (v5)
6. Walk by faith! (v6)
7. Imitate good leaders! (v7)
8. Keep Christ first! (v8)
9. Hold to sound doctrine! (v9)
10. Be humble and willing to sacrifice! (vv10-14)
11. Praise Him...with your mouth! (v15) 😊 😊
12. Do good to others and be generous! (v16)
13. Obey and submit to leaders! (v17)
14. Pray for leaders and the church! (v18-19)

Heb 13:20-21 ESV Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, (21) equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.