

Vain Worship

Introduction. Nothing is more important than true worship. God wants man to love and worship Him. True worship must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). Not only does God “seek” to be worshipped correctly, but man truly needs this worship.

In proper worship man draws near to God and imitates His nature. A Christian can no more live their life out of the atmosphere of worship and devotion than a fish can live out of the water. Those who devoutly love God, and praise Him as they ought, become more and more like Him who is completely lovely and good.

However, worship may be rendered which is not acceptable to God, nor beneficial to man (Matthew 15:9). The word for “vain” means that it is to no end or it is futile. The worship is useless because it does not accomplish its intended purpose. We can do a lot in vain when we come to serve God, and these we will examine today.

I. ***We May Assemble In Vain***

- A. It is possible for us to assemble for the worse (1 Corinthians 11:17). Some people attend in the same fashion as they go to a ball game or movie. They are not involved. So if they do not like the songs, or the preacher happens not to be as polished or as interesting in his delivery, they find themselves bored and “getting nothing out of it.”
- B. The next time you are tempted to be here just for the sake of being here, ask yourself how you would feel if Jesus were to come again while we were in our assembly? How would He find your heart (Psalm 96:9; 138:2)? If it is not right, how would you explain to Him that you loved Him with “all your heart, soul and mind” (Matthew 22:37)?

II. ***We May Sing In Vain***

- A. When Israel became worldly and unjust in their manner of living, and their worship cold and formal, God condemned them (Amos 5:23). We must sing “with the spirit” and “with the understanding” and then live in keeping with the sentiment of the songs (1 Corinthians 14:15).
- B. There is no better evidence of a corrupt heart than the lack of love for beautiful songs. Christians sing because they love God, and find in singing an outlet for expression of their joy (James 5:13). Consider the effects and importance of singing with our brethren (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19).

III. ***We May Pray In Vain***

- A. To be heard, our prayers must be from a sincere heart (James 4:3). We must also ask according to God's revealed will (Isaiah 59:1-2; Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 15:29; 28:9; 1 Peter 3:12; 1 John 5:14). God answers prayer when all the conditions are met.
- B. Have we lost our faith in God's ability to answer prayer? How do you treat your time with God? Is it a quiet time when you can thank Him for what He has done or ask Him to help you through troublesome times? Study your Bible and take note of the events in people's lives that prompted them to go to God in prayer.

IV. ***We May Commune With The Lord In Vain***

- A. Paul said that one may eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). This is partaking of the Lord's supper in vain.
- B. Motive gives character to deeds. If the motive in eating the Lord's supper is not to proclaim the Lord's death, or to have communion with Christ and the brethren, it is in vain (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:20-33).

V. ***We May Give Of Our Means In Vain***

- A. Someone may give all his goods to the poor, but if there is not love that motivates him, it is for nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3). If someone does not give with a true view toward helping the congregation and helping brethren in need, then our giving is in vain.
- B. Our giving shows the love of God in us (1 John 3:17-18). It measures our spirituality. Sadly, some treat it as "club dues" or an entertainment fee that they pay each week. If our heart is set to help the work along or is not motivated out of a heart of love, it is vain worship.

VI. ***We May Preach And Teach In Vain***

- A. Our teaching, and all that grows out of it, may be vain, and will be, if it does not follow the truth. In the days of the apostles, some preached Christ out of "envy and strife" (Philippians 1:15). Those who preach another gospel different from the one Paul preached would be "accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).
- B. It is not enough simply to preach something. It is all vain unless we "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). Everything else is vain as far as salvation is concerned. All members of the Lord's church are to become mature in mind (Hebrews 5:12). But, even teaching the truth, if it is not practiced, is vain (Romans 2:21-22).

VII. ***We May Do Good And Be Good In Vain***

- A. We read of some who will argue that they have done many mighty works in the name of the Lord and still they were cast away because they did not obey the Lord's will (Matthew 7:21-22).
- B. Cornelius was a good man when the angel came to tell him where to find the preacher of the gospel (Acts 10:1-6). But he was not a saved man because he needed Peter who would tell him the words of salvation (Acts 11:3-14). It is not enough to be good and moral, for this alone cannot save. If it could have, it would have saved Cornelius.

Conclusion. If you cannot do something right, you might as well not do it at all. God is the same way about our worship. When the children of Israel came back from captivity, they became very lax in their worship to God. In fact, it was so bad that God said it was better if they would just stop worshiping Him (Malachi 1:10). I shudder to think about that when it comes to some of our worship today. I hope that our worship is not "useless" or "to no end." I pray that our worship meets its intended purpose of turning our minds toward God and pleasing Him.