

# THE ACT OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

by  
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Prisoners Bible Crusade  
2212 Stonecypher Road  
Lucedale, MS 39452

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## PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

*“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:21-27).*

With such words we are given clear instruction in Holy Scripture as to our procedure in Christian worship. (1) We are told what to do in preparation before we approach God in worship: *“lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.”* (2) We are told what to do in the act of worship: *“receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”* (3) We are told what to do after the service of worship: *“be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* (4) We are even told how to continue in a spirit of worship: *“bridle the tongue . . . visit the fatherless and widows . . . keep unspotted from the world.”* We need help

in worship, don't we?

One of the catchisms followed by a certain denomination in the Christian faith asks the question, "What is the whole duty of man?" It gives the answer, "The whole duty of man is to worship God and enjoy Him forever." It is not only a duty but the highest possible privilege for us to worship God.

### **What does worship mean?**

To worship means to ascribe worth. The words used in the original languages of the Bible (Hebrew and Greek) which describe the worship of God mean "to do obeisance, to do reverence; to feel awe and devotion in the presence of one; to render religious service or homage; to act piously toward one."

W. E. Vine has written in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, "The worship of God is nowhere defined in Scripture. A consideration of the above verbs shows that it is not confined to praise; broadly it may be regarded as the direct acknowledgment of God, of His nature, attributes, ways and claims, whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving or by deed done in such acknowledgment." (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966; page 236).

Man needs to worship. He was made in the "image" and "likeness" of God (Genesis 1:27) and has a natural longing to fellowship with God. Man cannot live without God. If he does not worship the true and living God, he will make images before which he will prostrate himself in acts of worship (Romans 1:18f).

The God who is revealed in the Christian Scriptures is worthy of our worship. We do not come before Him carelessly and without preparation. James 1:21 tells us how to prepare to meet God in worship. In the grand old King James Version the text reads, "*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.*" That is how one prepares to meet the true and living God in worship.

### **Purify your actions**

But what is the "*filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*" which we are to lay aside? Goodspeed translates it "everything that soils you, and every evil growth." The Twentieth Century New Testament uses the words "all filthiness and whatever wickedness still remains." The New English Bible reads "all that is sordid, and the malice that hurries to excess." While Weymouth translates "all that is vile and of the excesses of malice." The meaning is clear: To meet God in worship one must settle the sin problem.

God accepts no one who is defiled by sin. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*" (Isaiah 55:6, 7); There is no substitute for a man's forsaking the wicked way and unrighteous thoughts if he would meet God in truth and peace.

The New Testament Scriptures issue the same call. "*Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth easily beset us*" is the appeal of Hebrews 12:1. The apostle Peter urges us to "*abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest*" (1 Peter 2: 11, 12).

## **Purify your heart**

The deeds of the life must be cleansed for one to come in peace before God. But God looks upon the heart also. So the heart must be prepared. Jesus said, *“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8).

James gives guidance in the areas of conduct and attitude when he writes, *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up”* (James 4:8, 10). The hands refer to conduct; the heart refers to motive and attitude. Both must be pure before God in order for us to worship aright.

The Psalmist asked, *“Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?”* The answer is, *“He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart”* (Psalm 15:1, 2). Again the question was asked, *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place?”* And God answers the same, *“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart . . . He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation”* (Psalm 24:3-5).

People in ancient Israel understood that one must be clean to approach God. They even washed their clothes and bathed their bodies before approaching God in worship (Exodus 19:14, 15). Both physical and spiritual cleanliness are important in preparing for worship.

“But,” someone objects, “I have sin in my life which I cannot remove. How can I ever approach God to worship Him?” The answer is in the Christian gospel. God has provided complete, free, and eternal forgiveness to those who trust Jesus Christ as personal Savior. *“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin . . . If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (I John 1:7, 9). The good news of the gospel is that you can be forgiven of every sin.

Come to God now. Tell Him the truth about your sin. Ask Him to forgive you. Believe that He does forgive you because of what Jesus did for you when He bore your sins in His death on the cross. Thank God for forgiveness as an act of your faith in Him.

Thus cleansed from every sin, you are ready to approach God in peace and receive the blessing of worship. *“Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace”* (Job 22:21).

## **PARTICIPATING IN WORSHIP**

When God would inform us how to participate in Christian worship, He made the simple statement, *“Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls”* (James 1:21). He teaches us that Christian worship is not only our giving our praise and adoration to God; it is our receiving the word of God.

The text speaks of four aspects of worship: (1) It speaks of the act by which we *“receive”* the word of God. That means we are to receive it favorably. We are to make it our own. We are to receive it as a benefit which God bestows upon us. To worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) is to receive the word of God. (2) It speaks of our spirit and attitude in receiving the Word of God as the spirit of *“meekness.”* That means we are humble before God, willing to be taught by His word. It is the spirit of young Samuel who said, *“Speak Lord; for thy servant heareth”* (I Samuel 3:9). It is the spirit of the ancient nation of Israel who vowed, *“All that the Lord hath spoken we will do”* (Exodus 19:8). It is the spirit which recognizes the authority of the spoken or written word of God. (3) It speaks of the permanent location and influence of the word of God. It is *“engrafted”* within the human heart. There it takes root and

bestows its holy influence through all of one's life. (4) It speaks of the blessing which the word of God can have in one's life. It is "*able to save your souls.*"

You will observe that in Christian worship there is a great emphasis placed on the Bible. We read from the Bible. We discuss portions of the Bible. We sing songs which are built upon Bible teaching. We pray and claim promises recorded in the Bible. We carry a copy of the Bible with us as we assemble with Christians to worship. Worship would hardly be Christian worship if it was not centered in the Bible, the inspired and infallible Word of God.

### **Receive the Word**

There is no substitute for the attitude of mind which is willing to hear the Word of God and accept it for what it says and how it applies to life. Paul praised the Christians in Thessalonica, saying, "*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*" (I Thessalonians 2:13).

Do not approach the Bible as you would approach some other book of religion. It stands distinct from all other books. It is **the Book** among all books. Only the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God to men. To receive the Bible is to receive the message of God; to reject the Bible is to reject God's Word to you. Receive the Word as if God spoke it personally to you alone.

### **Receive the Word with meekness**

*"The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price"* (I Peter 3:4). Meekness is listed as one of the nine-fold fruit which the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the Christian. It is an inwrought grace of the soul, a temper of spirit in which we accept God's dealings with us without disputing or resisting. To receive the Word of God with meekness means one hears it, understands its applications to his personal life, and lives by its standards in day-by-day relationships.

There is a great problem with the tendency of man to draw back when the principles of Holy Scripture cross the preferences of his life. That is the opposite of a meek spirit. Settle once for all that the Bible is the authority in the field of religion. Our only choice concerning what the Bible teaches is whether we will yield to God and follow it, or rebel against God and reject it. God Himself has spoken in Holy Scripture. What He has spoken in the Bible must be obeyed in our hearts and lives. Be willing that your life will be evaluated by Bible principles. Be willing to change anything in your life which the Bible shows needs changing. That is how you receive the Word with meekness.

### **Receive the Word to retain it**

Permit the Word to become "*the engrafted word*" to you. Implanted in the heart by the consent of your will and the work of the Spirit of God, It will abide to bless you.

Jesus told of a sower of seeds in a certain farm. Some seed fell upon the pathway and was eaten by the birds. Some fell among thorn and were choked so they produce no harvest. Some fell upon ground and produced 30 fold, 60 fold, and even 100 fold. The seed, Jesus said in interpreting the parable, is the Word of God. The soils are the hearts of men. Make your heart the good soil upon which the seed of God's Word falls, takes root and produces a great harvest of holiness before God.

*“Be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior”* (II Peter 3:2) Learn to say with the Psalmist, *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart”* (Psalm 119:11) and you will be able to testify with the prophet, *“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart”* (Jeremiah 15:16).

### **Receive the Word to grow by it**

The Bible is to your spirit what food is to your body. It provides sustenance by which you grow. God has commanded us, *“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (II Peter 3:18). That command is accompanied with the provision, *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (I Peter 2:2). The Bible is our spiritual food. That is why you read the command, *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (II Timothy 2:15).

Would you become stronger in faith? Study the Bible. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). Would you fight victoriously the good fight of faith? *“Put on the whole armour of God,”* one part of which is *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Ephesians 6:11, 17). There can be no spiritual growth apart from your soul’s being nourished by the Bible.

### **Receive the Word to be blessed by it**

James promised, *“Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”* (James 1:25).

Joy and rejoicing attend the application of the Word of God in one’s life (Jeremiah 15:16). Great peace and freedom from offense blesses the life of the person who loves the law of God (Psalm 119:130). Even in times of trouble and anguish, great delight fills the hearts of those who heed the principles of Holy Scripture (Psalm 119:143). If your life would be blessed and a blessing, stay close to the Bible.

As you worship God, keep your heart open to hear what God says to you through His inspired Word. *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (II Timothy 3:16,17).

## **PROFITING FROM WORSHIP**

A non-Christian was heard to remark, “I do not understand why those Christians go to church. It seems so uninteresting and profitless to me.”

Why do Christians go to church? I can think of two reasons immediately. (1) We go to church because God commands us to do so. He instructed us, *“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another”* (Hebrews 10:24, 25). The Christian attends the meetings of his church because God instructs him to do so. (2) We go to church because there is a great personal profit to be gained from attending as we minister to one another in the Christian assembly. Let us review some of the benefits the church provides. How does the Christian profit from worship?

## **Worship teaches us humility**

It is good for a person to see himself as he really is and to know in truth his relationship with God.

*“O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods . . . O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand”*(Psalm 95:1-6). *“For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods . . . Honor and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously . . . for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth”* (Psalm 96:4-13). *“The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubim; let the earth be moved. The Lord is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy . . . Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy”* (Psalm 99:1-5). *“Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations”* (Psalm 100:3-5).

Those inspiring verses from the book of Psalms show us the greatness of our God and our humility before Him. It teaches us who we are and who He is. Worship is the best experience for us to see ourselves as we really are and to understand the grace of our God.

## **Worship affords fellowship with God’s people**

The Bible teaches the importance of our gathering together for group worship of God. The Lord commanded ancient Israel to meet three times each year, coming from all across their nation, at the central sanctuary to worship Him. Psalms 122-126 are called “Psalms of Assent.” They were sung by the pilgrims as they journeyed to Jerusalem to worship God at those special occasions. One of them begins, *“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord”* (Psalm 122:1). It indicates one pilgrim would invite another to journey with him to worship God. They might cry out to one another, *“O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together”* (Psalm 34:3).

The New Testament takes up that same theme. It recognizes also the importance of Christians worshipping together. The model prayer which Jesus gave (Matthew 6:9-13) indicates it is to be prayed in group worship of God. The pronouns He used are all in the plural, *“Our Father . . . Give us . . . Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors . . . Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”* Jesus knew we needed to worship God together in the assembly of the church.

The book of Acts indicates the earliest Christians gathered to worship God together. The earliest converts continued together to be taught by the apostles, went from house to house in Christian fellowship, and saw God add to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts

2:42-47).

When certain of the believers became negligent about meeting with other believers, this word of instruction was given them: *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25).

You can meet God other than in the assembly of your church. But you need the experience of fellowship with God’s people in corporate worship. Attend church.

### **Worship affords instruction in the Word**

God has set certain office ministries in the church: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. Those office ministries are designed to fully equip His people for work in His service for the ultimate building up of the body of Christ. But to be so equipped, the Christian must attend upon the teaching of his spiritual leaders. That teaching comes most commonly in the meetings of the church.

Christian can help Christian in corporate worship. Colossians 3:16 reads, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”* Did you notice that Christians can *“teach and admonish one another”*? That is a blessing which comes from public worship of God.

Paul set the example for Christian ministers by teaching in every church where he visited (I Corinthians 4:17). He calls to our attention that God has set the ministry of teacher as a permanent office in the church (I Corinthians 12:28). He recognized himself to be appointed of God as *“a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher”* (II Timothy 1:11). And he wrote that every pastor must be *“apt to teach”* (I Timothy 3:2).

Yes, teaching is one of the basic functions of a New Testament church. It is important that Christians attend regularly the assembly of a Bible-believing and Bible-teaching church.

### **Worship gives expression to praise and thanksgiving**

We need opportunity to open the heart and let the joy of the Lord flow freely. It is good to be among God’s people when through songs, prayers, and testimonies we can say, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name”* (Psalm 103:1). *“O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord”* (Psalm 105:1-3). *“Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”* (Psalm 107:8).

We might conclude this study of the profit of public worship with the words of Psalm 117, *“O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord.”*

## **PERFORMING AFTER WORSHIP**

The Bible makes it quite clear that Christians need to assemble together to worship God. It tells the benefit of public worship, gives examples of Christians at worship, and even commands us to not forsake the custom of assembling with the saints.

But what is a person to do when the service of worship is ended? Before worship he is to

cleanse himself of sins of attitude and act so as to approach God acceptably and in peace. During worship he is to receive humbly the Word of God and let it take root within him. But what difference does that make when worship in public assembly has ended and each has gone his separate way?

### **Practice the principles learned**

The Bible gives this instruction: *“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”* (James 1:22-25).

A person is to live after public worship by the principles of God which he learned during public worship. An incident which is reported to have happened in England many years ago underscores the importance of this truth. A certain issue of great moral and ethical import was facing the community. A pastor preached to his people on Sunday concerning what God’s Word, the Bible, said on the issue. One of the men in the congregation was heard to remark, “Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is permitted to interfere in the affairs of one’s week-day.” The gentleman overlooked the fact that the great reason we worship on Sunday is to receive guidance by which we can live the other six days of the week. The principles of revealed religion must influence how we live day by day or we do not have a true religion at all.

The best spirit in public worship is to be available for God to show you truth by which you may honor Him in conduct when you have departed from church. No one respects the person who speaks one way in public worship and lives a contrary way in private life. Practice what your faith preaches!

Jesus taught that hearing must be followed by doing. He said, *“Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it”* (Matthew 7:24-27).

The ancient prophet Samuel said, *“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry”* (I Samuel 15:22, 23).

The Apostle Paul added this witness, *“Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified”* (Romans 2:13).

It is important that one know the truth which is taught in Holy Scripture. But to know and not to do is most serious; it is sin. It is in obeying the voice of God that we are identified as His special people (Exodus 19:5). We study to understand truth and then we seek to apply the truth we have learned to the affairs of daily life. That is how we become *“doers of the word, and not hearers only”* (James 1:22).

There is a grave danger in hearing and not doing. It is the danger of self deception. A person might attend regularly the meetings of the church in his community. He might study the Bible in that assembly, and perhaps even study further at home. He might become content in the fact that he is a faithful student of the Word. But that is not enough. To know and not to apply,

to hear the truth and not live by the truth is “*deceiving your own selves*” in the words of our text (verse 22). As in the parable Jesus told, it is to receive the Word on shallow soil of stony ground, to hear it and rejoice in it, but to bear no fruit as a result of receiving it.

That is the tragedy of our generation. There has probably never been a time in human history when a knowledge of the Bible has been so readily available and so widespread as today. The truth of the Bible is presented on printed page, by audio and video tapes, by radio and television, in Bible class in homes and churches. Anyone who desires to know the truth can know it today. But there is a great neglect in the application of Bible principles to daily life in business affairs, home relationships, and the other areas of human relations.

The Bible has a blessed ministry in the life of the people who hear it and obey it. It is “*the sincere milk of the word*” which enables us to grow (I Peter 2:2). Those who hear and obey will “*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (II Peter 3:18).

It gives us light for our pathway of life (Psalm 119:105). It keeps the way of man from iniquity (119:3) and keeps the way of young men clean (119:9). Hidden in the heart, the Word keeps us from sinning against God (119:11).

Blessed is the person who resolves, “*Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go into the path of thy commandments . . . Incline my heart unto thy testimonies . . . Stablish thy word unto thy servant...Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy reghteousness*” Psalm 119:33-40.

### **Preseve the Principle Learned**

It is important that the Christian retain what he learns of God in the Bible. God warns, “*Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and ;est they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy son’s sons . . . Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God*” (Deuteronomy 4:9,23). Take heed lest you reap what the prophet Jeremiah reported of his generation, saying, “*A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God*” (Jeremiah 3:21).

James warns, “*If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was*” (James 1:23, 24).

How much better to have the blessing described in James 1:35, “*Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*”

## **PRACTICING CONTINUING WORSHIP**

Worship of the true and living God is the greatest experience possible for mortal man. We can worship Him in the privacy of our own hearts in personal devotions. We can worship Him in the great assembly of the saints in a house dedicated to Him. We can worship Him on a special day each week, as the Christian Sunday is a day of worship. We can worship Him on any day of the week.

The worship of God should be practiced on the day and at the hour set by the

congregation of Christians, because we all need the inspiration of public services of worship. But proper conduct by which life is lived according to the principles of the Word of God is an act of worship which should be practiced daily.

James 1:26, 27 speaks of the practice of continuing worship as indicated by a life of obedience in these words: *“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”*

The text teaches there are three evident proofs that one lives in a spirit of blessed and obedient worship before God. (1) He bridles his tongue. (2) He exercises benevolent concern. (3) He keeps his life clean of sin. Let us discuss those three principles as we consider the practice of continuing worship.

### **The continual worshipper controls his tongue**

James says he *“bridles”* his tongue. The word used refers to the bit and bridle which is used to control a horse. It is such a control of the tongue which indicates one stands in reverence before God and seeks to live by divine principles.

It is no small thing to control the tongue. James wrote, *“If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body”* (3:2). A professor under whom I studied in the theological seminary was accustomed to say, *“The tongue is the last citadel of Satan to fall to the forces of divine grace.”* And yet, the tongue must be controlled as a testimony of allegiance to God.

James points out (in chapter 3 of his epistle) how a bit in the mouth of a horse can turn its whole body. He points out further how the small helm of a ship can turn a great vessel which is driven by fierce winds. And he reminds us how the use of the tongue can set the direction of one’s whole life.

Like a little flame which sets the forests afire, the tongue can kindle a great matter. *“It us an unruly evil,”* James wrote, *“full of deadly poison”* (3:8).

There is a strange contradiction the use of the tongue. The same tongue can bless God and curse man made in the image of God. That is as consistent as the same fountain of water giving forth bitter water and sweet water at the same source. It is as consistent as a fig tree bearing olive berries. Such a thing is contrary to nature.

The Christian’s use of his tongue to bless, help, encourage, and inspire people agrees with his relationship with God. Such a right use of the tongue is an act of worship before God. *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”* (James 1:19).

*“Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”* (Matthew 12:36, 37).

### **The continual worshipper does benevolent ministry**

The one with a spirit of continuing worship will engage in benevolent ministry. *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction”* (verse 27).

Does it seem strange to you that God would make benevolent care a major part of the exercise of pure and undefiled religion? It should not. He shows special concern for them all

through Holy Scripture. The psalmist wrote of God, *“Thou art the helper of the fatherless”* (Psalm 10:14). God stands as judge over them that men may not oppress them (Psalm 10:18). Psalm 68:5 reads, *“A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.”*

God is always on the side of the weak and helpless. The person who shares the spirit of God will be concerned about the needs of people about him. God recognizes and honors such a spirit in those who trust Him.

Jesus pronounced a special blessing on those who cared for Him: *“For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”* When He was asked when such a ministry was rendered to Him, He replied, *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”* (Matthew 25:35-40).

Exercise benevolent ministry to the widows and orphans, for you are thereby doing service to God Himself. No wonder benevolent ministry is an act of continuing worship before God.

### **The continual worshipper avoids worldliness**

The man with a spirit of continuing worship will *“keep himself unspotted from the world”* (verse 27). The world will tarnish, contaminate, and stain the person who lives by its standards. It is the business of the Christian to be **in** the world but not **of** the world (John 17). Jesus prayed to the Father concerning us, *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”* (John 17:15, 16).

When the New Testament scriptures use the term *“world,”* it speaks of the course of unregenerate human society. The Bible warns, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”* (I John 2:15-17). What is the problem with the world? John wrote, *“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness”* (I John 5:19). Satan is the god of this present world system (II Corinthians 4:4). Thank God for our Lord Jesus Christ, *“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”* (Galations 1:4, 5).

As an act of obedience to God, an act by which we ascribe worth to Him above all others, we Christians separate ourselves from the evils of the present world system that we might please God.

And so we approach the concluding summary of our study on Christian worship. Based on (James 1:21-27), we have seen how to prepare for worship, how to participate in worship, how to profit from worship, how to perform after worship, and how to practice continuing worship by our life style. This study goes out to you with the prayer that it may aid you in your worship of the living and true God.

*“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart”* (Psalm 95:6-8).

