

# Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

## SHOULD ERROR REGARDING THE FIVE ACTS OF WORSHIP DISRUPT FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANS?

### PART ONE

Bruce Stulting

#### INTRODUCTION

In part one of this article we will begin to answer the question, “Should error regarding the five acts of worship disrupt fellowship between Christians?” Next month (April) the second and final part of the article will examine **Error Regarding Worship**. In both installments, we will be answering the general question under the following three headings: We will: (1) Show New Testament authority for each of the five acts of worship and related matters; (2) Examine some “new innovations” in worship; and (3) Demonstrate that error regarding the five acts of worship does indeed disrupt fellowship between Christians.

#### NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORITY FOR WORSHIP

*We Walk By Faith*

The Apostle Paul stated, “...**We walk by faith, not by sight**” (2 Cor. 5:7, all scriptures will be from *KJV* unless noted). The faith by which we walk comes “**by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**” (Rom. 10:17). Thus, where there is no Word there can be no faith. Therefore, anything apart from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). As we walk by faith, we must “**Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.**”

**Abstain from all appearance of evil**” (1 The. 5:21-22). Regarding worship, we must hold fast only to that which we can “**prove**” from the Scriptures. Since we are to “**abstain**” from things that are not authorized (**evil**), we must not participate in unauthorized acts of worship. The importance of this principle is clearly seen in the following Scriptures:

**Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes: that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other** (1 Cor. 4:6; *ASV*, 1901).

**I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed** (Gal. 1:6-9).

**For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book** (Rev. 22:18-19).

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*Editorial...*

## **FORGIVING THE “INEXCUSABLE IN OTHERS”**

C. S. Lewis wrote, “To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable in others because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.” The sad part about Lewis’ comment is that Lewis himself did not know how, when, and on what terms God forgives anyone of anything whether it concerns when one becomes a Christian or at what point God forgives the sin(s) of one of His erring children. Lewis was a member of the Church of England and, believing its doctrines, was blind to the gospel plan of salvation and the New Testament church. Please consider the following remarks concerning the previous C. S. Lewis quotation.

I have and do long to “forgive the inexcusable in others because God has forgiven the inexcusable in me.” However, God forgave “the inexcusable in me” only when I believed and obeyed His Will (Rom. 6:17, 18). In becoming a Christian, obedience requires all to believe that Jesus Christ is the only Begotten Son of God (John 8:24; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). Having believed in Christ, all are commanded to repent of their sins (to use Lewis’ terms that which is “inexcusable in me”) (Acts 17:30). Repentance is the breaking down of one’s stubborn will, the seat of all sin and rebellion against God. Having repented, one ceases the habitual, purposed practice of sin. Having died to sin at repentance, one now purposes to habitually obey God in all things for the rest of one’s life. Thus, one is scripturally qualified to be immersed in water by the authority of Christ into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for or unto the remission of one’s sins (Mark 16:16; Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38, 42, 47; 10:47; 22:16; Gal. 3:26, 27; Rom. 6:3, 4, 17, 18; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21). Only then is one saved from one’s alien sins (the “inexcusable” is forgiven). At that point one becomes a Christian.

Jesus continues to forgive members of His church as they walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7; See Acts 2:42 regarding what it means to “walk in the light”). Indeed, concerning Christians, John wrote, “**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**” (1 John 1:9). This is God’s second law of pardon for the child of God—repentance, confession of one’s sin(s), and prayer to God for forgiveness (Acts 8:18-24).

When on the cross Christ cried out to God for Him to forgive those who crucified Him because they did not know what they were doing; that prayer was not answered the moment Jesus spoke those words. However, in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, our Lord’s plea to God on behalf of those sinners who killed Him was answered. It took place when they were pricked in

their hearts by the gospel message (Rom. 1:16), repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission of those sins (Acts 2:37, 38; 41).

No matter how strong my desire and willingness is to “forgive the inexcusable in others,” whether they need to become Christians, or they are erring children of God, such does not rule out the need for “others” to “save themselves” by believing and obeying the gospel of Christ, God’s power

to save (Acts 2:40; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 1 John 1:9; Acts 8:18-24). Whether pertaining to one becoming a Christian or a church member needing forgiveness of sin(s), God cannot do so when those “others” refuse to repent of their “inexcusable” sins, obeying the gospel of Christ as such pertains to their given spiritual needs.

—David P. Brown, Editor

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(Continued From Page 1)

We conclude that all who would go beyond, fall short of, seek to change, disregard, or attempt to make substitution with regard to the Scriptures, stand condemned before God.

Regarding the foregoing principle, we understand that “The Scriptures teach that in Christian work and worship we must do only that which is authorized by the Word of God” (Deaver, 35). We must not go beyond or fall short of the teaching of the New Testament. We must not allow what God condemns, nor should we condemn what God allows.

#### *Worship Has Always Been Regulated*

From the earliest days of creation, worship has been an important part of man’s life. The first recorded example of worship is found in Genesis chapter four where we read that Cain and Abel gave a portion of their goods to God. Jehovah has no need of the items brought, but desired the attitude that was to accompany such devotion. Of the two offerings, Abel’s was acceptable to God and Cain’s was not (Gen. 4:5). The difference is that Abel acted by faith and Cain did not (Heb. 11:4). Thus, we see worship has always been regulated. From the fact that Cain’s sacrifice was rejected, we learn the following truths:

1. Everything we do is not worship.
2. God has not left it up to man to determine what to offer God as worship.
3. Just because something is intended to be worship does not make it worship.
4. Sincerity in worship is necessary, but not sufficient to guarantee that one’s worship will be acceptable to God.
5. All acts of devotion directed toward God are not necessarily worship.
6. To offer anything to God as worship that is not authorized by God is sin.

Based on the fact that Abel’s sacrifice was acceptable to God, we learn the following truths:

1. Only specific acts authorized by God are considered worship.
2. God has always determined what constitutes worship.
3. Only when God authorizes an act does that act become an act of worship.

4. When one sincerely offers authorized acts of worship to God, He is pleased.

5. All authorized acts of devotion directed toward God are acts of worship.

6. To worship according to God’s divine pattern is righteous.

Thus, it behooves us to discover what worship means and how it is to be conducted. Furthermore, we should inquire as to the object or focus of our worship. Our English word *worship* is defined as “reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power; also: an act of expressing such reverence” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*).

Concerning worship Jesus said:

**But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth** (John 4:23-24).

From this text we learn that worship consists of the proper object of worship (“**God**”), the proper attitude of worship (“**in spirit**”), and the proper acts of worship (“**in truth**”). If the “right acts” are done, with an improper attitude, then the worship is not acceptable to God (cf. Isa. 1:11-15; Amos 5:21-27; Mat. 6:5). If the right “attitude” is present, but the wrong acts are done, then the worship is not acceptable to God (cf. Acts 17:22-23; Col. 2:18-23). Furthermore, if the right acts are offered with the proper attitude, but to the wrong object, then worship is not acceptable to God. Based upon this text we may define worship as “an act or series of acts that are authorized by God and directed to Him and are characterized by an attitude of reverence and motivated by love.” Since these acts are addressed to God they must involve purpose and intent to worship. Also, these acts are to be performed by “**true worshippers**.” Therefore, these acts of worship must be performed by a faithful servant of God if they are to bring honor to Him and bless the worshiper. Our discussion of worship will deal primarily with the collective worship of the saints on the Lord’s Day. To ascertain what acts are approved of God in worship, one must examine the total teaching of the New Testament regarding worship. With this in mind, we offer the following proposition: “The New Testament authorizes only singing, praying, teaching,

giving, and partaking of the Lord's Supper as acceptable acts of worship." As proof of this proposition, we offer the following syllogism:

**MAJOR PREMISE:** All total situations the component parts of which are scriptural are total situations that are scriptural.

**MINOR PREMISE:** The total situation described by the proposition "The New Testament authorizes only singing, praying, teaching, giving, and partaking of the Lord's Supper as acceptable acts of worship" is a total situation the component parts of which are scriptural.

**CONCLUSION:** Therefore, the total situation described by the proposition, "The New Testament authorizes only singing, praying, teaching, giving, and partaking of the Lord's Supper as acceptable acts of worship" is scriptural.

The major premise of this proposition is self-evident and cannot be rationally denied. The minor premise is also true because the New Testament authorizes one to sing (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16), to pray (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 2:8), to teach (Acts 2:42; 20:7), to give on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and to partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7) as acts of worship.

The fact that God requires specific acts of worship should not be surprising because God-approved worship has always required specific action (cf. Gen. 22:5; Jud. 7:15; 1 Sam. 1:19; 2 Sam. 12:20; Isa. 66:23; Zec. 14:16; Mat. 2:2; 15:25; Acts 8:27; 24:11; Rev. 3:9; 15:4). Only when one has the proper attitude ("**in spirit**") and does the proper acts ("**in truth**") that are directed to the proper object (**God**) can his or her worship be acceptable to God. One must never violate the Laws of God regarding worship, nor should one make laws that God has not made. Since true worship is essential to our pleasing God, we must determine how the Bible authorizes.

## HOW TO ESTABLISH BIBLICAL AUTHORITY<sup>1</sup>

### *Matters of Obligation and Option*

At the beginning of this part of our study, we will note that there are two basic types of authorized actions. Some actions and beliefs are matters of obligation—they are things that must be done if one is to please God. Thus, when God demands (through His Word) that man is to take a specific course of action, He thereby authorizes man to undertake that action. The fact that God does make demands upon man and holds man accountable for his actions (Rom. 14:21; 2 Cor. 4:7; Acts 17:30-31) implies that some authorized matters are matters of obligation.

On the other hand, there are authorized matters that are optional. In such optional matters, man is given liberty to choose between several equally acceptable courses of actions, each of which are authorized by God. Since such ac-

tions are authorized in the sense that they may be done, man is left to his own discretion to decide whether or not to do them. Only by careful consideration of the totality of the Biblical teaching on a subject can one determine which authorized actions are obligatory and which are optional.

### *Explicit and Implicit*

Everything the Bible teaches is done either "explicitly" or "implicitly." By explicit, we mean teaching that is directly stated—in just so many words. The statements and propositions of the Bible are explicit statements. Such plain statements set forth the teaching in a very clear and straightforward manner. Implicit teaching is that which is not directly stated, but is understood from things that are directly stated. Thus, implicit teaching is deduced from things that are directly stated. It is imperative for us to understand that implicit teaching is just as authoritative as explicit teaching. What God teaches implicitly is just as authoritative as what He teaches explicitly from direct statements. Therefore, explicit and implicit teachings are of equal value.

### *Command, Example, and Inference*

It is necessary in our discussion to determine how the Bible, explicitly and implicitly, authorizes our beliefs and actions whether they are obligatory or optional. It has been generally accepted in past times, that the Bible authorizes by (1) Command; (2) Example; and (3) Inference. While these categories are basically true, I believe they need to be more precisely stated. A more accurate way to convey the meaning of each category would be: (1) Direct Statement; (2) Approved Example; and (3) Implication. Biblical authorization is obtained through one of these three ways.

*The Bible authorizes actions through direct statements.* While the Bible does authorize through commands, this is too limited. A command is only a small part of a broader category known as "direct statements." We recognize that a command (which is a direct statement) does authorize. However, there are other direct statements (which are not commands) that also authorize. There are several different types of direct statements. One type of direct statement that the Bible uses to authorize our beliefs and/or actions is a "declarative statement." In giving the great commission, Jesus said, "**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved**" (Mark 16:16). This is not a command, but rather it is a statement of fact. Thus, it is a "declarative statement." From this verse we are authorized to teach, (1) Salvation is an individual choice; (2) Faith precedes baptism and salvation; (3) Baptism follows faith and precedes salvation; and (4) Faith and baptism are equally important in relation to salvation. There are many such "declarative statements" in the Bible. As noted above, the Bible authorizes by command, which is in general a direct statement, but more specifically it is an "imperative statement." When Peter used an "imperative statement" when he commanded, "**Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of**

sins” (Acts 2:38). Such statements authorize those, to whom they are directed, to act in harmony with their specific demands.

The Bible uses “interrogative statements” (questions) to authorize beliefs and/or actions. Paul asked, “**Is Christ divided?**” (1 Cor. 1:13). From the context of this question we learn that Christ is not divided. Thus, we are authorized to believe and act in accordance with this basic truth that is revealed by this question.

Another type of direct statement used to establish Biblical authority is “hortatory statements.” These are statements of exhortation. When we read where Christians are exhorted to pursue a particular course of action, it is clear that God approves of the action. Thus, the action is authorized. Paul’s exhortation to “**go on unto perfection**” (Heb. 6:1) is an example of this type a “hortatory statement.”

The last category of direct statements is “optative statement.” This type of statement expresses a desire or wish. Paul’s statement, “**God forbid!**” is an example of an “optative statement” (Rom. 6:2). From this statement, we are authorized to believe and teach that we should not continue in sin that grace may abound (cf. Rom. 6:1-2).

These five different types of statements are examples of direct statements. For further study on direct statements the reader is encouraged to read Roy Deaver’s book, *Ascertain Bible Authority*. In this book, brother Deaver discusses eleven different types of direct statements and how they relate to Bible authority (Deaver, 59-60). Thus, to say that the Bible authorized by “command only” is to disregard ten other types of direct statements.

*The Bible authorizes by accounts of approved actions.* To say that some things are authorized by example is somewhat imprecise. Remember, scriptural authorization indicates sanction, direction, or permission of a particular belief and/or action. While some examples in the Bible do provide authorization, all do not. Only accounts of approved actions can serve as proper examples and authorize the faith and practice of Christians. When, then, does the Bible account of an action constitute an example?

There are at least five different types of examples of action found in the Scriptures. They are: (1) Actions that are sinful—Mat. 26:69-74, Peter denied Christ; (2) Actions that are optional and temporary—Acts 2:9, preaching to the Jews only; (3) Actions that were optional and permanent—Acts 13:4, traveling by boat to preach the gospel; (4) Actions that were obligatory and temporary—Acts 8:4, confirming the Word by signs; and (5) Actions that were obligatory and permanent—Acts 8:26ff, baptism is a burial. Obviously, sinful actions cannot serve as authoritative examples. Of the remaining four types of examples, only those actions that are optional/permanent and obligatory/permanent constitute examples that are authoritative. This reflects the point we

made earlier about obligatory/optional matters. Thus, some things are examples in the sense that they may be done and some things are examples in the sense that they must be done. Therefore, “when we find the Bible account of an action (1) which was manifestly right within itself; (2) which was either optional or obligatory; and (3) which related to a permanent part of Christianity—then we have authority for imitating that action” (Deaver, 55).

Before leaving our discussion of examples, we must point out that an example does not exclude. We are commanded to “**Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature**” (Mark 16:15). In carrying out this command, we have an example of the Apostle Paul traveling by boat. This example of travel by boat does not exclude travel by car today. The obligation is to “**go.**” However, the method of going is optional. Later, we will see an example of this principle when we discuss the Lord’s Supper. “Determining when the account of an action constitutes an example requires (1) application of the principles of Biblical HERMENEUTICS, (2) application of the principles of LOGIC, and (3) due consideration of the TOTALITY of the Bible teaching with regard to the subject at hand” (55).

The Bible authorizes by implication. The term “necessary” in connection with “implication” or “inference” is redundant since every implication is necessary. If something is truly implied from the available evidence, then the inferences we draw are by nature “necessary.” To say that an action, fact, or teaching is implied, is to say that it is required or demanded by the available evidence. This method of ascertaining Bible authority relates to the “explicit” and “implicit” statements/teaching that we discussed earlier. When the Bible, through a direct statement, absolutely demands (i.e. implies) some non-explicit conclusion, the truth and validity of that conclusion is just as valid in force as any direct Biblical statement. Brother Deaver gives the following example of authority by implication:

For example, I am authorized to teach that, in his becoming a Christian Saul of Tarsus repented of his sins. But, we have no explicit statement that he repented. We reason as follows: If (A) it is the case that no person can become a Christian without repenting of his sins; and if (B) it is the case that Saul of Tarsus did become a Christian; then (C) it is the case that Saul of Tarsus, in becoming a Christian, did repent of his sins. We affirm the (A) and would set out the proof. We affirm the (B) and would set out the proof. This would give us the truthfulness of the conjunction made up of conjuncts A and B. Therefore, (C)—it is the case that Saul of Tarsus, in becoming a Christian, did repent of his sins. But this fact is taught IMPLICITY, not EXPLICITLY (58).

This illustrates “implication.” That which we know by “implication” is just as true, just as factual, and just as authoritative as those things that we can know “explicitly” (directly stated). It is authoritative, not because we inferred it, but because God implied it.

## *Expedient Matters*

Before leaving our general topic of “How To Establish Biblical Authority,” we need to give some attention to matters of expediency. In carrying out our obligations, there is an area of expediency. In fact, every obligation God ever gave involved expediency. The area of expediency involves human judgment. Whenever God specifies an obligation, but does not specify the details of how to meet the obligation, then we are authorized to use human judgment to determine the best (most expedient) way to meet the obligation.

Expedient actions are those that are advantageous. Thus, there is no expediency if there is no advantage. “We must keep in mind that there is NO EXPEDIENCY where there is NO OBLIGATION. I cannot seek to justify thus and so by arbitrarily calling it an “expedient.” The failure to recognize and to respect this fact created serious problems in the early Restoration Movement” (64). In proving that a thing is truly an expedient, we thereby prove that thing to be divinely authorized. Thus, it falls within the realm of faith.

In our consideration of expediency, we need to learn the difference between “optionals” and “expedients.” An example of this difference can be found in our obligation to assemble (Heb. 10:25). This obligation makes an assembling place necessary (essential). Regarding a place to assemble we have four “optionals.” We could (1) buy a building; (2) rent a building; (3) build a building; or (4) meet in a private home. Depending on the circumstances, it might be expedient to meet in a private home. However, under different circumstances it might be expedient to buy a building. Thus, we see that a thing can be an “optional” and an “expedient” at the same time. In fact, all “expedients” are “optionals,” but not all “optionals” are “expedient.”

Also, we must learn the difference between an “expedient” (aid) and an “addition.” Any action employed in worship or service to God that is not authorized by the Scriptures is an addition. A true aid (expedient) carries with it an inherent obligation that is authorized by the scriptures. This inherent obligation is the source of the scriptural authority for the aid. Any action that is without this underlying obligation is unauthorized and, therefore, sinful.

In the Great Commission, God has given us the obligation to “Go” (Mark 16:15). We can go by walking or riding a horse. Walking and riding a horse are different ways to fulfill our obligation to “go.” They both sustain the same relationship to our obligation to “go”, yet, they have no particular relationship to each other. Walking is not an aid (expedient) to riding a horse, nor is riding a horse an aid (expedient) to walking. However, a walking stick is an aid when used to assist walking. Likewise, a saddle is an aid when used to facilitate riding a horse. Walking and riding a horse are “coordinates” since they sustain the same relationship to carrying out the obligation to “go.” The walking stick and saddle are authorized, but do not sustain the same relationship to

carrying out the obligation to “go” as do walking and riding a horse. The walking stick is a subordinate to walking and a saddle is subordinate to riding a horse. They are true aids since they facilitate walking and riding a horse, which are “optionals” in relation to the command to “go.” Anything that changes the command to “go” is an addition. A “Missionary Society” is such an addition. This changes the command from “go” personally, to “send” someone else. Thus, the “Missionary Society” is not a true aid and is, therefore, sinful. More will be said about expediency when we discuss the different items of worship.

## *The Silence of The Scriptures*

When called upon to justify a certain practice in religion, many have responded by saying, “The Bible does not say not to!” This statement presumes that God approves of those things that He did not specifically prohibit. It also establishes the fact that there is a realm known as the silence of the Scriptures. Much division in religious matters has occurred because of a lack of respect for the silence of the Scriptures. This is not some “new” issue. During the “Reformation Movement,” Martin Luther held to the view that anything not specifically condemned by the scriptures was allowed. Ulrich Zwingli, Swiss reformer, held to the view that whatever was not allowed by the Scriptures was prohibited. This difference was never resolved during their lifetimes. Similar opposing views still exist today.

As noted previously, the Bible authorizes by “explicit” and “implicit” statements. Therefore, we understand that the Bible authorizes by what it says not by what it does not say. If the silence of the Scriptures allows actions, then the “direct statements,” “examples,” and “implications” of the Scriptures become just “good suggestions” and anything would be acceptable in worship and service to God. Literally, anything goes! Rubel Shelly, one of the leading digressive voices of our day, once said:

If it were the case that anything not expressly forbidden in the New Testament is permissible in the Christian religion, then we could not only use pianos to accompany our singing but beads to aid our prayers, crucifixes to focus our devotion, and hashish to enhance our sensitivity. We could also initiate an organizational network similar to that which has been protested so strongly in Catholicism or begin financing church projects with bingo games (where legal) on Tuesday evenings. Not one of these things is explicitly forbidden in the New Testament, and no one who denies the legitimacy of the authority principle as outlined above can consistently argue against any of them (Shelly, 33-34).

Brother Shelly has since abandoned this fundamental Biblical truth and embraced all sorts of religious error.

The writer of Hebrews understood that the silence of the Scriptures does not authorize actions. Regarding the silence of the scriptures inspiration recorded:

**For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to an-**

**other tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood** (Heb. 7:13,14).

Since the Law of Moses was “silent” regarding men from the tribe of Judah being a priest, it would have been sinful for Jesus to serve in that capacity under that Law. Thus, in order for Jesus to be High Priest under the Law, there would need to be a change in the Law (Heb. 7:12). Only God has the authority to change the Law. When men try to justify actions based upon the “silence of the Scriptures,” they go beyond the Word of God and sin (Gal. 1:6-10; John 9-11). We must observe only that which the Lord has commanded (Mat. 28:20).

### AUTHORIZED ACTS OF WORSHIP

Now that we have established that God has always regulated worship and how the Bible authorizes, we turn our attention to the specific acts of worship. These specific acts of worship were set forth previously in the following proposition, “The New Testament authorizes only singing, praying, teaching, giving, and partaking of the Lord’s Supper as acceptable acts of worship.” Remember, our discussion of worship will deal primarily with the collective worship of the saints on the Lord’s Day.

#### *The Bible Authorizes Singing As Worship*

According to the New Testament, Christians often worshiped God in song. Though Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned without cause, they lifted their voices in songs of praise to God (Acts 16:25). Later, Paul wrote, **“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”** Eph. 5:19; cf. Col. 3:6). With heartfelt love, the Christian verbalizes his praise, thanksgiving, and faith to God (among other things) through singing. Through our singing, we **“... offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”** (Heb. 13:15). Regarding Ephesians 5:19, Alan Highers wrote:

The plural imperative, amplified by the plural participles, embraced all of “the saints ...at Ephesus” to whom the epistle was addressed. Therefore, the effect is to involve all of them in the actions described. The force of the apostolic language may be stated as follows: ALL of you speaking, ALL of you singing, ALL of you making melody, ALL of you giving thanks, ALL of you submitting yourselves.

Further, in addition to the fact that all of the Ephesians were implicated in the “singing” and “making melody,” the text says the “speaking” in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs is “to yourselves” or “one to another,” (ASV, 1901). The word is *heautois* to which Thayer ascribes the significance of “reciprocally, mutually, one another.” Some have tried to bend “one to another” to mean one singing a solo to another who is listening passively. But such a construction misses the mutuality demanded by the reciprocal pronoun. Dana and Mantey speak of an “interchange” of action characteristic of recip-

cal pronouns (39).

The passage in Colossians also uses the reciprocal pronoun in urging the brethren to “admonish one another.” Thus, when two or more are gathered together, only congregational singing is authorized as worship. This pattern of reciprocal action is to be followed whenever and wherever two or more Christians gather to worship God in song.

#### *The Bible Authorizes Praying As Worship*

One of the most common expressions of worship is prayer (Acts 2:42). In prayer, Christians verbalize their reverence to God. By taking their petition before God, Christians acknowledge their complete dependence upon Him (2 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Pet. 5:5-7). The daily lives of the early Christians were filled with prayer (1 The. 5:17).

It is only natural that corporate worship would include public prayer. The Scriptures place the responsibility of leading understandable prayers in the assembly upon faithful men (1 Tim. 2:8; 1 Cor. 14-16). This pattern for prayer is to be followed whenever and wherever Christian men and woman assemble for worship.

#### *The Bible Authorizes Teaching As Worship*

Teaching and preaching is a form of worship. Paul viewed his preaching ministry as a form of religious devotion comparable to priestly service in the temple. Such is the significance of the terms “minister” (*leitourgos*), “ministering” (*hierourgeo*) and “offering up” (*prospheia*), as employed in Romans 15:15-16. When early Christians came together, they studied God’s Word. This often meant listening to preaching, but would include public reading of divinely inspired books (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Col. 4:16). It must be understood (by the congregation and the preacher) that the preacher is the spokesman of God (cf. 1 The. 2:13). The preacher is not there to promote himself or give a performance, but is most effective when God and His Word are given preeminence. True preaching will **“be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine”** (2 Tim. 4:2).

Christians engage in worship during the delivery of a sermon when they: (1) acknowledge in their hearts that the preaching is from God (1 Pet. 4:11); and (2) intend to heed and obey the Word. However, no worship happens when the preacher engages in entertainment or the listeners view the sermon as a speech to be evaluated. Only when the Word of God is planted in the hearts of sincere Christians will the Lord’s church grow (Luke 8:11-15).

#### *The Bible Authorizes Giving As Worship*

In order to support the various works of the church, the early Christians followed the pattern of contributing weekly to a common treasury (1 Cor. 16:1-2). These funds were used to support the preaching of the Gospel and relieve destitute people (Phi. 4:15; Rom. 10:15; Acts. 11:29,30; 2 Cor. 9:13).

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A Christian's giving can arise from impure motives or be accompanied by sinful attitudes. However, those who purposefully give to the cause of Christ from a cheerful heart express true worship (2 Cor. 9:7). Truly, it is better to give than to receive (Acts. 20:35). Christians realize that their contribution is but a small part of their faithful service and devotion characterizing Christian living (Gal. 2:20). Thus, Christians are authorized to go beyond their weekly contribution to help those in need as they have opportunity (Gal. 6:10).

*The Bible Authorizes Communion As Worship*

During the Passover Feast before the Crucifixion, Jesus instituted a new avenue of worship called the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-38). From the Passover, Jesus gave spiritual significance to the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. The unleavened bread was representative of the undefiled, sinless body of Christ that was sacrificed upon the cross. The fruit of the vine (grape juice) represented His precious blood that was shed for many for remission of sins (Mat. 26:26-28; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:5). Apart from the Lord's Supper, these items are merely food. However, when the Christian partakes of these items in the proper manner and at the proper time, they express worship and honor the sacrifice of the Lord that purchased their salvation.

When partaking of the Lord's Supper, the worshiper is both in communion with Christ and fellow saints. The Supper serves to remind the worshiper of the sacrifice of the Lord and His second coming (Mat. 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:26). Of the church at Troas, it is written, "**And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...**" (Acts 20:7). Thus, by precept and example, we learn that the Lord's Supper is a memorial feast conducted on the first day of the week in which the worshiper commemorates the Lord's death. The worshiper does this by partaking of the emblems that represent the body (unleavened bread) and blood (grape juice) of Jesus.

*The Bible Authorizes Corporate Worship On The First Day of The Week*

Any discussion of worship would be incomplete without considering the proper day of worship. Some, such as the Seventh Day Adventist, Sabbatarian Baptists, and Roman Catholics worship on Saturday (the seventh day of the week). However, a careful study of the Bible shows (1) that the seventh day Sabbath was given only to the Hebrews (Deu. 5:2-15). It was given about 1450

B.C. when God delivered them from Egypt. (2) The Sabbath was part of the Ten Commandments that was part of Moses' Law. The New Testament tells us that, in his death, Christ abolished the Law of Moses, along with those Commandments (Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-16). Following are some reasons why the first day is our day of worship:

1. Christ was resurrected "**on the first day of the week**" (Mark 16:9).
2. On the first day He taught two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:1, 13-27).
3. After His resurrection, He met twice with the apostles and blessed them on the first day (John 20:19-26).
4. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and empowered them on the Day of Pentecost, which always came of the first day of the week (Acts 2:1-4; Lev. 23:15-16).
5. The first sermon proclaiming Christ as the resurrected Lord was preached on Pentecost.
6. Jews, who had previously rejected Christ, accepted him and were baptized on Pentecost Sunday.
7. The church was established, thus the Christian age began that day.
8. The New Covenant of Christ went into effect.
9. The early church worshiped, communed and gave their offerings on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).
10. Early Christian writers such as Barnabas, Ignatius and Justin Martyr of the second century, tell us they worshiped on the first day of the week.

Acceptable worship must be offered in faith. "**Whatever is not of faith is sin**" (Rom. 14:23). But faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). The Word of Christ nowhere instructs us to observe the Sabbath, but it does teach us to worship God on the first day of the week. God said, "**This is my beloved son... hear ye him**" (Mat. 17:5). Faithful Christians obey Christ by assembling to worship God on the first day of every week. **(Part two of this article will appear in the April 2022 issue of CFTF—Editor).**

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