

Beyond Worship

Then he sent out young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. Moses took half the blood and set it in basins; the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. He then took the covenant scroll and read it aloud to the people. They responded, "We will do and obey everything that the LORD has commanded." - Exodus 24:5-7 HCSB

An elderly man who was hard of hearing went to get a medical checkup. After the usual tests, the doctor carefully explained his recommendations to the aged man, who nodded his head in agreement.

A few days later, the doctor was surprised to see the old man walking down the street with a drop-dead gorgeous woman on his arm. The doctor approached his patient and asked to speak with him. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"Why doctor, I'm just doing what you told me to do. I found me a hot mamma and got cheerful."

The doctor threw his hands up in the air in exasperation. "No!" he cried, "I said you have a heart murmur and to be careful!"

We laugh at this but many of us have selective spiritual hearing. We approach church with preconceived notions of what is to come of the experience. Many approach their worship merely as a time to get pumped up or to get reacquainted with friends. They look forward to the beautiful music, the drama or the images up on the screen. Many (myself included) look forward to the potlucks.

However, we must never forget that the principal point of worship is change. We are there to get to know God better and to change our ways to suit Him.¹ We are there to worship Him and lift Him up which involves humbling ourselves beneath His mighty hand.² Worship is about recognizing the worldly influences in our ways of thinking and rooting them out.³

Ideas are dangerous things. True belief leads inevitably to consequences. The people of Israel had witnessed God's tremendous power to deliver; had seen their enemies destroyed before their very eyes; had trembled at the foot of Mt. Sinai as the earth shook beneath their feet and they believed. Their belief led immediately to a vow of obedience.

Though theirs was an unusual time and the circumstances extreme, the principle is actually pretty basic. We believe a police officer is waiting around the curve so we slow down. We believe that our weight is bad for our health so we begin dieting. We believe there is an intruder in our house so we do not go in but instead, lift our cell phones to our ears as we dial 911.

We need to approach worship hoping that we will come out the other side changed creatures. We should come out of the service whispering, "We will do and obey everything that the Lord has commanded."

¹ 1 Peter 1:16; Philippians 2:5

² 1 Peter 5:6

³ Romans 12:1-2