

Worship Wars 5-28-00

How can we love God who we have not seen if we do not love our brother who we have seen? And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1Jn 4:20,21

We have to understand none of us comes from a superior religious background than anyone else. In your tradition and your denomination or non-denomination there are shortfalls and errors like in any other. This fellowship does not have a flawless doctrine or **the** one perfect way to worship. We all search for what is closer to our understanding of Scripture than any other, I hope. That is not true of all and maybe not even of many, but I hope that is true of us here. But we must understand that we have all misunderstood the Word at times and put priorities on things that are less important. Amen? The form of outward worship when systemetized is called religion. That is not what we are after – We are after relationship, yet always there is the temptation to go that less important route of religion.

What is important? Jesus had a couple of connected priorities that he said were above all others. The first to love the Lord with all our heart soul mind and strength. The second to love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and prophets hang on these two. If you love the Lord you will love your neighbor for God is love and whoever loves is born of God. This is relationship not a religious form or style.

I want to apply this to some underlying tendencies within our fellowship. If we have a charismatic background there is a tendency to want to see more demonstrative emotional worship – worshipping in freedom in the spirit. The traditional want to see more word and less what they would label outward soulish demonstration. They want to worship in truth. The fact of the matter is you can't see my heart and I can't see yours. You can guess and may discern but let me ask you if your discernment has ever been wrong? Who are you to judge your brother? To God he stands or falls. Jesus commands you to have one attitude toward your brother, LOVE. And He says if you can't love him you can't love me. Romans 14 makes it very clear. We are not to pass judgement on disputable matters(doubtful disputations). Read Ro 14:1-15:3

Look at verse 6 and lets bring it home – He who expresses his worship in outward manner does so to the Lord. He who utters repeated expressions of praise to God gives thanks to God, and he who is quietly worshipping gives thanks to God. Jump to verses 10-13

Now if we use the excuse, I just want to help him get it right, you know, learn the error of his thinking, experience more of the fullness of God. If I jump up and down and shout hallelujah am I in the flesh? How do you know? Discernment? Are you suppose to be judging my actions as related to God? Verse 12 says we give an account of ourselves to God, not of others. Instead focus on making sure you are not a stumbling block to your brother by your insistence that everyone have your same conviction on these disputable matters.

And if I sit quietly and do not make a sound, or sing A Mighty Fortress is Our God, am I in the Spirit, experiencing the fullness of God? How do you know? Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. It doesn't say that the other way around. Some of us have been acting as if God looks on the outward appearance but man looks on the heart. We have

all seen dead churches singing hymns and many of us have seen lively worship music that was just as dead, a show glorifying man, entertainment.

We have talked about the freedom to worship the way you are led to worship. I truly believe there is not enough private worship so we get all excited about doing corporate worship – my way. A chance to catch up on my private worship. All this pent up desire that should be coming out through the week explodes on Sunday with huge expectation. Sunday can't make up for a lack of personal private worship. Of course my worship style the right way and the most life changing way and the least fleshly way. Both styles of worship think this same thought. I know because you have expressed it to me in so many words. We are working past this, but let us see the root so it doesn't crop up in other areas. There are disputable matters that we would like to think we have the right way when in fact there is no right way. Religion insists there is, but relationship knows no set form but spirit and truth.

The New Testament says very little about style of worship. What it does mention was a carry over from Old Testament tradition, like raising of hands. I think there is so little description of worship as an outward expression in the New Testament intentionally. If it was in there, today we would insist everyone act that certain way and make a rule and formula for what worship looks like. Instead as the Lord showed us before, each person worships as their heart leads them and God help us if we condemn their expression of thanks to God because it isn't like ours.

Can outwardly expressive worship be 'soulish'? Let me explain that what is meant by that accusation is that it is for the edification of the physical, emotional or mental self and not to the glory of God. Of course expressive worship can be that but so can conservative or contemplative worship. Those are matters of the heart not the body expressiveness or lack of it.

Many do not understand that when the Scriptures refer to fleshly nature it is not talking about the body. Flesh is the sin nature. When God made our bodies and soul, which includes our emotions, He said it was good. The point is what is the force behind the soul and body that makes them a participant of evil or of good. Is it the Spirit of God in our Spirit? Or is it the fallen nature that is suppose to be crucified. Quiet contemplative singing can be just as soulish (fleshly) as a dancing praise chorus. The question is not the form but where is the heart, the spirit. Am I praising my Savior or looking for a feeling. Am I seeking to please the self or my LORD? Only He knows for sure and I can't fool Him. You may judge someone but it is to God that they stand or fall – and remember the harshness with which you measure out that judgement is what you yourself will receive.

Is emotion a part of worship? Just like the body is neutral so emotion is neutral. It is energized by the Spirit or the sinful nature. You can have emotion and be in the Spirit. In fact I challenge you to have a genuine focus on the Lord alone and it not affect your emotions. Jesus wept, was angry, was joyful, burst out in expressions of thanks to the Father, agonized more than any of us have. Was He in the flesh? Pharisees often condemned what they did not understand of Jesus expressions or lack of them. They almost always misunderstood him.

Can our time of praise be emotionalism? Sure. All mood and little substance, caught up in a feeling and no focus on the Lord who should always be the center of our worship. What does that look like? Sometimes it looks sober and still, sometimes it looks joyful and dancing. Do you see what I'm saying? Only God can judge the heart. You are not suppose to, you are just suppose to

love that brother or sister – whatever background, taste, style, or preference. Music can be played in such a way as to manipulate your emotions – but the point is are we focussed on God or the feelings and emotions? What is the priority and motivation of the heart behind our worship? God alone can judge that and we just need to guard our own hearts not be the policeman of others. That is the HS job – not yours.

Neither am I saying anything goes. We won't tolerate anything clearly opposed to Scripture. It is our guideline and what helps us discern between soul (motivated by the flesh) and spirit. In that case we will speak the word and it will judge. That is the elders job to look after the safety of the sheep. If something is threatening their safety we will bring out the staff, the word, and apply it. That is what is happening right now. Too many statements with too little love that involve form and not substance, and I am saying, that is it. No more. LOVE - Jesus commanded it. So we must insist on it.

We will strive to find a balance where we can all worship as a body. We don't want to leave anyone out nor do we want to push any particular style on anyone. We will try to include a hymn or two each week and truly worship in spirit and truth as we sing it, just as we will with choruses. We will not judge our brother's expression but will love him or her just the way they are. I will not say you must learn to express yourself as I do nor will I insist that my way is more in the spirit than yours. Let each esteem others better than himself will be our motto.

I will not let my brother's background affect my opinion about his statements or style. I will believe the best about him because he is my redeemed brother that loves the same Lord as I do and lays his body a living sacrifice on the altar that I do. Charismatic and Evangelical traditions have things we can learn from, just as all the traditions do. None is **it**, or perfect, only Jesus is it. He's what we gather around. He is the one we focus on. He is why we meet. He is everything.

I remember the first time the Spirit said I should be on my knees. I didn't want to do it. I was very moved by the depth of my adoration of the Lord and how I sensed his presence. I knew I would be looked at and seen as a little radical or different, but it came down to the fact that did I want what man would accept or was I free to act according to conviction. Was I more worried about what God thought than man? The opposite can be true too. You can see people kneeling and just do it because others are and don't want to be out of place.

I remember going to a worship conference with someone from a very traditional background, fairly young in the Lord. She said many of the people there were sincerely raising their hands to the Lord but many were not truly inspired but just doing it out of habit. I asked her how she knew. She said she could just tell. By the end of that conference the Lord had worked in her heart and she was raising her hands. It wasn't that she learned an outward expression to copy, she overcame a prejudice, quit judging her brothers, and just worshipped and the HS led her to do the very thing she condemned in others.

I like to put a stake in the sinful nature by exposing it for what it is. Are you ready? We criticize things that have hurt us in the past, or things we are afraid of. Why are we afraid? It is sometimes because the LORD has drawn us there and we refused to go. Now we condemn those who went.

It is not about any outward expression and if you think I'm trying to get you to act a certain way you missed the point or I didn't make myself clear. It is about obedience to the Spirit and focussing on the LORD alone. Still when we worship corporately we consider our brothers and sisters so as to be in unity for they are the LORD's body, and I give up my freedoms so as not to offend the weak.

Gal 5:6 Outward form, or none – what counts? Faith expressing itself through love! In the next few weeks I am going to share about worship. It is not to change your outward expression or to have us all raising hands in unison or to stifle anyone's expression – but rather to help us all focus on focal point of all worship – The LORD Jesus Christ.

Gal 5:19-21 list those things that are obviously the sinful nature. These are the things that must be confronted. In this list are the words heresy and sedition. Heresy according to *Strongs* is dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims. Another definition is a body of men that follow their own tenants. Sedition is defined as dissention or division.

If you have been guilty of judging your brother because of his outward expression or lack of it there is one thing to do – repent – turn from that critical attitude of my way is right and realize this is a disputable matter between that person and God. God didn't ask you to straighten out others expression in worship. That is between them and God. Will you let it go right now? Will you put it back in Jesus hands and ask for forgiveness for trying to interfere in their relationship with their Master, even if you had good intentions? If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us.

Let's draw a line here today and refuse to hold on to disputable matters of any kind. If you truly think the body is being led away from the pure Gospel come to me or one of the brothers and ask them to bring it up at a meeting of the brothers and we will pray over it. If it is not that serious let go of it and work on the sincerity of your own relationship – that it is purely to the glory of God. Can we do that? If we don't we will face this again and again and slow the growth of everyone involved.

Let's be a university of Jesus. University means unity in diversity. In today's universities the different fields completely contradict each other. The name 'university' no longer fits the institutions. But the church should always be a university. It should be a place where we appreciate and enjoy the outward differences in unity as we worship the same Lord. Let disputable matters be up to personal conviction. There is enough heresy in the religious world over the essentials of faith. We do not need to divide ourselves up over the disputable matters and sin when we do so. LOVE your brother and let him live according to his convictions and you live by yours. Let's insist on unity not uniformity.