

Worship (13)

Becoming Like Christ

Eph 4:20-24 *But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

An orchestra is made up of many different instruments: string – harps, violins, violas, cellos and double basses; brass section – trumpets, trombones, horns, tuba; wind section – flutes, piccolos, clarinets, oboes; percussion section – bass/snare drum, triangle, cymbals, piano.

To have beautiful music, the individual players must each make beautiful music and then it combines with the beautiful music of others.

Worship is a lot like that - individual believers are instruments. By themselves they can worship Christ; they can make quite beautiful music, like a flute or violin player on its own. But the ultimate beauty comes when believers combine their individual worship into corporate worship.

Worship takes place in two ways - privately and publicly, individually and corporately. You cannot have one without the other. They feed off and into each other. One who never worships God in his or her individual life will not worship well corporately. And one who never joins with other believers to worship corporately will find his or her own individual worship of God is stifled, limited and even damaged.

Now I am going to spend just one sermon looking at private worship and the remainder of the series looking at public worship. The reason for that will become clearer as we define what it means to worship individually.

What is the essence of worship?

We began with a definition of worship: Magnifying the glory of God through the lens of your entire being with other believers.

So to put it simply, worship on an individual level is to magnify the glory of God through the lens of your entire being.

Let me put that another way. We are to be glory-bearers. We are to be carriers, conductors, transmitters, reflectors of God's character, of God's nature.

We are to carry within ourselves the glory of God and reveal it to others. The more we know and make known – the more we are worshipping as individuals.

How do we do that?

The primary way we do that is by becoming like Christ.

John 17:22-24 *And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. ²⁴"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

Jesus is the brightness of God's glory – **Heb 1:3**, so when we become like Him, we are being glory bearers – we are carrying the glory of God to all who see us.

This comes through a process of being shaped into his moral image (**Romans 8:29, 2Cor 3:18**). This is why it is not necessary to spend a number of sermons on individual worship but to rather talk about it in general. That is because most things taught from the pulpit have to do with this – how to be more like Christ in various areas of our lives, how to be more pleasing to Him.

Here in **Ephesians 4:22-24** we have the well known passage on Christlikeness, perhaps the clearest passage on it. We see that becoming like Christ is found in three parts – devotion, separation and consecration.

Devotion

The heartbeat of becoming like Christ is that phrase '*renewed in the spirit of your mind*'. It is sandwiched between the put off and the put on, because it is the meat. It is what drives the other two.

What does it mean?

Romans 12:2 tells us that this *renewing of our mind* is the thing that brings about transformation. So we know we are on the right track. Transformed means 'metamorphosis'. This radical change into the moral image of Christ takes place by the renewing of the mind.

Colossians 3:10 supplies the missing information - '*Renewed in knowledge, according to the image of Him who created him.*'

Our minds are renewed as we gain more knowledge of Jesus Christ's Person. Notice back in Ephesians the words '*Learn Christ*', '*Hear him, taught by Him.*' All this conveys the idea that we are to gain knowledge of Christ which transforms us.

Who teaches you? Christ, through His Spirit, teaches us. In the Gospel of John we read that the Holy Spirit will '*teach you all things*', '*guide you into all truth*', '*testify of me*', '*glorify me*'. We will learn of Him within the context of regular exposure to the Word of God.

What is it that we are learning? We are learning what He is like.

When getting to know someone, how do you find out what they are like? You find out what they do. You find out what they like and don't like. You spend time with them and let them speak, for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Renewing the mind is seeking to know Christ in this way. What does He like? What pleases Him? What does He dislike? What is His nature? How does He act? How does He treat people? What are His goals and purposes? What are His qualities?

I Cor 2:16 – *For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

Where will you find this knowledge? You will find it in The Word of God.

Now why then call this act of renewing of the mind *devotion*?

Because the renewing of the mind only happens when there is love involved.

You can learn the mind of someone to try to manipulate, and work with them. But when there is love/devotion involved you want to think like they do – like pupils of a Grand Chess Master, or married couples, think alike.

Our minds are only renewed when we are lovingly seeking to know Christ. There is surrender – His ways are better than mine, His will is better than mine, His wisdom is better than mine, His character is better than mine. And I want His to replace mine.

The more loving and passionate the seeking of Christ, the more likely it is that His mind will be illuminated to you by the Spirit of God (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).

Then the mind not only knows what Jesus is like, it begins to love what He is like. It not only knows what He loves, but loves what He loves.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

This is the kind of mind you will then have.

Now if you love what he loves, want to do what He wants to do, have His views on people and life, and overall have His mind – what kind of actions are going to come?

Quite naturally – you will want to separate from what is not pleasing to Christ, and you will want to be consecrated or dedicated towards what is.

Separation

“Put off the old man”. You are to put off, like a garment, that whole way of life that is corrupt and responds to deceitful desires.

Put off means separate from; say no to; abstain from; flee from; deny it; don’t yield to it; put it to death; avoid it; confess it where it is found; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, repent of it.

Rom 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Sin is to fall short of the glory of God. So the more we understand the glory of God as our minds are renewed, the more we want to separate from sin.

As your mind is renewed, some things won’t fit anymore. Who Christ is, and His mind – His love of what is true, good, just, noble, honourable, virtuous, commendable, will make many things change in your life.

All different kinds of sin won’t fit anymore. Media that feeds or encourages or celebrates sin won’t fit anymore. Places that celebrate or encourage sin won’t fit anymore.

You see, a Christian whose mind is not being renewed asks questions like “Why can’t I do this? What’s wrong with this? How far can I go?” Separation from sin seems like a meaningless thing to them. They want to know how much sin is permissible, how close to the

world they can be, how much filth is acceptable in a movie, how provocative they can dress without being openly offensive, how materialistic they can be without being clearly greedy.

A Christian being illuminated and growing into the mind of Christ keeps finding things which no longer fit.

But the Bible teaches another kind of separation. Perhaps I can push the illustration a little further. Sometimes you might be trying something on, and it fits. It is not clearly too big or clearly too small. But it isn't a good fit. It doesn't sit right. It doesn't complement your physique. It fits, but it won't be helpful.

We must separate not only from what is sinful, but also from what is not spiritually helpful.

1 Cor. 6:12 *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

Paul is talking about 'lawful things'. If something is lawful, then it is not by definition, sinful. And notice that there are two things Paul will not partake in from things that are lawful:

The first is anything that might enslave him - anything that is not necessarily sinful, but becomes an obsession, or a ruling master, or an addiction is something he will also put off. Sometimes we have to watch that our hobbies, interests, sports don't become masters that we feel we have to serve. Even food, entertainment, or even work can become this, and does for many men. There are voluntary slaves. If something exists like this in our lives, it inhibits our imaging forth of Christ, and we are to put it off.

The second thing is that which does not build him up. Paul does not want to waste his precious life on things that either break him down spiritually, or do nothing to build him.

So as you are devoted to Christ, and take on His mind from the Word of God, you must then increasingly separate from all that does not fit the mind of Christ, if it doesn't please Him, and if it feeds sin. Likewise anything that does not assist spiritual growth, or that becomes an idol in our lives is not a good fit. So we put it off.

And when you take something off, it supposes you will replace it by putting something on. And that is the third stage – putting on the new man, or as we've called it 'consecration'.

Consecration

Separation is turning away from, consecration is turning to. Separation is fleeing, consecration is following. Separation is rejection, consecration is embracing.

This third stage is where the character of Christ now comes from the inside (our renewed mind) out. We put on words, thoughts and deeds like Christ (*'after God' 'true righteousness and holiness'*).

You could say it this way – if a renewed mind means we love what is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, commendable, praiseworthy; then putting on the new man or consecration is giving ourselves wholly to these things.

We do the things that please Him. We live in accordance with His will, and nature, and purpose. We embrace speech that is Godly. We embrace thoughts that are Christlike. We use

our resources in a way that pleases Him. We actively do God's will – sharing the Gospel, loving believers, serving others.

Consecration means dedication. And what you are doing is saying 'I am a blood-bought child of God. I am to be totally given over to showing the Lord Jesus, not my own will, not my own ways, not how I would say it or do it, or respond. I am not a self-image bearer – that's the heart of pride. I am a glory bearer, and the glory alone belongs to God. So I yield and submit and surrender my body as a living sacrifice to be used to show forth Jesus Christ's glory – to magnify Him through the lens of my entire being by showing forth His character.'

And it is the giving of ourselves publicly. We put on the garment of Christ's character to wear in front of others.

Rom 13:14 *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

We put on the Lord Jesus. The renewing of the mind is largely an internal change, the putting on is the external change that others can see and thereby glorify God for.

So it is as if you are continually saying – "Yes, this looks like Jesus, I'll put this on. Yes, this is what Jesus would say. This is how Jesus would respond." From that renewed mind which understands more and more about the mind of Christ, you can at more and more points in your life say, "This is like Jesus. I'll put this on."

1Thess 5:21 *Test all things; hold fast what is good.*

Worship is showing forth the glory of God – so His true value and worth is seen and admired and praised. Who best shows forth the glory of God? God the Son, Jesus Christ, best shows forth the glory of God. And now we are the next link. We are to show forth Jesus Christ. This is how you sum up individual worship. Be devoted to seeking His mind, His heart, in personal devotion and communion. As the Holy Spirit does the work of illumination – He changes your mind to be like Christ. You love what He loves, and hate what He hates. And you grow in the intensity of that love and hate as you grow more. And from there you start taking things off that don't fit, or don't fit you well; and putting on things that do. And so others – both believers and unbelievers - start seeing the glory of Christ reflecting off you, and they praise Him. This is the beating heart of your worship as an individual.