

Continued from Page Three, "Striving For That Which Is Better"

denominational world says is necessary for salvation. Do as the Bible says! Why not live for God? Do His will; be "faithful unto death" that you might receive "a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Do as Paul says and "be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). Being a Christian is not for the lazy. It is not for the one satisfied to stay in the "pig sty"! Being a Christian is for those ready and willing to make the effort to live by a higher standard. It is for those who are willing to live by what God says, and not what the world says (I

Pet. 4:11). It is for those who are spiritually minded, and not worldly or carnally-minded (Rom. 8:6). It is for those striving for that which is better!

What about you, dear one? Where do you find yourself? Why not make your life right today before it is too late? Let us help you get started on that road that leads to everlasting life (Matt. 7:13-14)! When you do what the Lord says, and strive for that which is better, God will bless (Eph. 1:3), and you can look forward to a home in Heaven one day! Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

God is in the Room
By Jonathan L. Perz

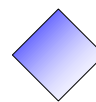
Consider that last obnoxious or profane statement, those disrespectful gestures, that heated and angry argument, those unkind words, or some other sinful activity. Would you have done or said those things if God were in the room?

The fact we often forget is that GOD IS IN THE ROOM!

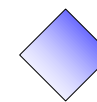
- "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his paths" (Prov. 5:21).
- "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good" (Prov. 14:3).
- "Does not God see my ways, and count all my steps . . . For His eyes are on the ways of man, and He sees all his steps" (Job. 31:4; 34:21).
- "For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from my eyes" (Jer. 16:17).
- "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13).

God heard those profane and corrupt words come from your mouth and saw you make those disrespectful gestures (Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:8). God heard every word of that heated and angry argument (Matt. 5:21-26). God witnessed you utter those unkind words (Eph. 4:31-32). God saw that sinful activity (Prov. 5:21). Whether done in fun or anger, God saw your folly. Whether you wanted Him to or not, God witnessed your shame.

If it is any consolation, I doubt that God, in His absolute holiness, stayed around long enough to witness all of your un-Christ-like conduct. I imagine He simply left the room with a tear in His eye over another unregenerate soul who professes to love Him, but in works denies Him. Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦



The Voice of Truth



June 19, 2011

Acceptable Worship
By Jimmy Pettigrew

There are at least four kinds of worship alluded to in the New Testament: (1) ignorant worship (Acts 17:23); (2) vain worship (Matthew 15:9); (3) will worship (Colossians 2:23); and (4) spiritual and true worship (Romans 12:2; John 4:23-24). In Hebrews 12:28, it says that worship must be done "acceptably." One reason the Lord's church exists is so Christians can come together and worship God (1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33-34; Hebrews 10:25). God demands that we worship Him and Him alone (Matthew 4:10). In Revelation 22:9, the angel admonished John to "worship God."

by it he being dead yet speaketh." "By faith" is the key. That simply means that Abel was told what to do, then believed and obeyed the instructions. Furthermore, Cain was also told what to do, but for some reason chose not to fully obey the instructions of the Lord. As a consequence of his conduct, God rejected his worship. God plainly told him, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. 4:7). Partial obedience is not obedience, but disobedience!

But what does the Bible say regarding acceptable worship? What is God's will on the matter? Worship is either right or wrong depending upon God's will. The only right worship is that which is authorized by God! "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). Notice the word "must." What does this say about how we worship? We are to worship God "acceptably with reverence and godly fear (awe)" (Hebrews 12:28). Worship must be "in spirit," that is, the worshiper must genuinely engage his spirit in the worship activity. He must be mentally and emotionally involved. "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1).

In Leviticus 10:1-2, we read of another example of not worshipping God in truth. We can learn the importance of worshipping just as God instructs from the example of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2). What was wrong with their worship? They "offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them." What happened to them? "There came forth fire from before Jehovah and, devoured them, and they died before Jehovah." Paul wrote, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). So, what does Leviticus 10:1-2 teach us? We must not add to or take away from God's word (Revelation 22:18-19). We must abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). We do not have the authority to decide how we are going to worship God. We MUST worship as He instructs! (Colossians 3:17).

Also, worship must be "in truth." God has always required that man approach Him "in truth," according to the divine commands which he revealed to man. In Genesis 4:3-7, we have the account of the worship of Cain and Abel. God accepted Abel's worship but rejected Cain's. Why? Because one did the will of the Lord, while the other chose to disobey God's instructions. We know that God told them what to offer as sacrifice from the reading found in Hebrews 11:4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and

Unfortunately, the current atmosphere in the church tends to treat worship as a time for entertaining the worshiper and catering to the worshiper's wants. People have lost the deep, reverent mind-set that approaches the worship assembly with a strong sense of respect and careful meaning to please God. Worship is important! It is not intended to be entertainment, but it is the act of paying reverence to God. To worship as one desires, without regard for the Lord's will, is to be guilty of "will wor-

Continued on Page Two

| About the Hillcrest church of Christ | | |
|--|---|--|
| Evangelist: Jimmy Pettigrew | | |
| How to Contact Us | Our Address | Schedule of Assembly |
| <p>Telephone: (920)499-5677 E-mail: hillcrestcofc@live.com</p>   | <p>1621 Hillcrest Drive Green Bay, WI 54313</p>  | <p>Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*</p> <p><small>*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month</small></p> |
| www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com | | |

In This Issue...

Pages 1 to 2 - Acceptable Worship
Pages 2 to 4 - "Striving For That Which Is Better" | Page 4 - God is in the Room

Continued from Page One, "Acceptable Worship"

ship" (**Colossians 2:20-23**). Instead of attempting to entertain people in our worship, we need to develop our appetites for pure, New Testament worship!

What ways do men worship God acceptably? When the church came together for worship, "*Paul preached unto them*" (**Acts 20:7**). Preaching and teaching God's truth is involved in worshipping God acceptably (**Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 4:2**). The lessons and sermons are designed to teach God's word so as to encourage obedience by those who listen.

What ways do men worship God acceptably? Paul said, "*In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*" (**Philippians 4:6**). We pray, not only to praise and thank God, but also to ask for our needs and the needs of others (**1 Timothy 2:1-4**). The early church continued stedfastly "in prayers" (**Acts 2:42**). We are to pray to God, in the name of Jesus (**Luke 11:1-4; John 14:13**).

What ways do men worship God acceptably? Again Paul said, "*speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*" (**Ephesians 5:19**). The entire assembly joins in singing gospel songs. There is no choir or special groups, but simple congregational singing.

"Striving For That Which Is Better"

By Jarrod Jacobs

It is sad to see people who have become satisfied and complacent with their life the way it is, from the physical as well as the spiritual aspects! Some have the attitude that if they reach a certain point equal to, or perhaps just above the "Jones'," then they are happy. Unfortunately, there is a growing element in our society that presses for everyone to be the "same," and cries "foul" if anyone seems to have a more enjoyable life than others.

Those who become Christians are to strive for that which is better. The fact that they wish to become a Christian shows that they want to improve their lives. They want to leave their relationship with sin and Satan (**Eph. 2:12**) and enjoy a relationship with God (**II Jn. 9**). They believe that Jesus is the Son of God (**Jn. 8:24**), they repent of their sins (**Lk. 13:3**), they confess their faith in Christ (**Matt. 10:32**), and are baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 22:16**). In doing this, a precious few are saying that they are striving for that which is better. They know that

What ways do men worship God acceptably? The Lord's Supper is to be observed every first day of the week (**Acts 20:7**). The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ, (**1 Corinthians 11:23-29**), prior to His death on the cross and was observed by the Lord's church. The supper consists of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine as memorials of the body and blood of Jesus (**1 Corinthians 11:20-36**).

What ways do men worship God acceptably? By giving to the cause of Christ! "*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come*" (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**). The work of the church is wholly supported by Christians freely giving on every Sunday. These are the five items which are to be done in worshipping God. These are acceptable to Him when we do them in "spirit and truth" (**John 4:23-24**).

Brethren, all worship problems share at least two traits in common: one, rejection of the principle of God's authority, and two, a desire to feel one's religion through man-made attractions. May God help us to be strong and committed to His ways and have a "Thus saith the Lord" for all we say and do; "*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour*" (**1 Timothy 2:3**). "*Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*" (**1 Peter 2:5**). •

following their own wishes and thoughts will not get them to Heaven (**Jer. 10:32**). They know that God is wiser, and wish to be in His presence in eternity (**Isa. 55:11; I Cor. 1:20-31; I Jn. 1:7**).

Once one becomes a Christian, he is then free from his past sins (**Rom. 6:17-18; Col. 2:12-13**). Then, the true test begins! One who is a Christian recognizes that God's word is the standard he follows. He does not follow the consensus of the people (**Jn. 12:48**). He recognizes **II Timothy 3:16-17** and knows that no act, word, or thought is a "good work" unless it is authorized by God in the Bible! He understands that God's thoughts are important. His thinking must conform to the will of God, and he must think on things that are pure and upright; not on things that are debased and degrading (**Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:8**). He sees that he is not to act like "everyone else." In fact, most will be astonished at the degree of change that has taken

Continued on Page Three

Continued from Page Two, "Striving For That Which Is Better"

place (**I Pet. 4:3-5**). This person recognizes that his speech must also be in line with the word of God (**I Pet. 4:11**). To talk as the world talks is unacceptable to a Christian, for he is striving for that which is better; to a higher standard! The apostle Paul wrote: "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (**Phil. 3:13-14**). The word "press" means, "to pursue, ensue, follow, given to" (**Strong's**). In other words, Paul said he was following, or pursuing that "mark" set before him! He was active. He had a goal/purpose, and was given to better things because of Christ!

When Jesus talked of the two roads one may travel in this life, He said, "*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able*" (**Lk. 13:24**). To "strive" is to, "struggle, lit. (to compete for a prize), fig. (to contend with an adversary), or gen. (to endeavor to accomplish something):-fight, labor fervently" (**Strong's**). Christ was saying that in order to be on the strait and narrow road that leads to life we must struggle, or fight for it. We must be contending and active in reaching this goal (**Matt. 7:13-14**)! The Christian cannot be complacent. We will not accidentally go to Heaven. It takes determination! It takes effort! It requires striving for that which is better!

Unfortunately, there is an element of lazy people who do not work toward this end. As a result, they are like the prodigal son who, after having wasted his living, was found in the pig sty (**Lk. 15:15-16**)! When Jesus spoke that parable, we rejoice to know that the son did not stay there, but repented and returned to his father (**Lk. 15:17-21**). I am sad to say, however, that instead of leaving, we see some folks today who are satisfied to stay in the proverbial "pig sty" long after the prodigal son has gone home to his father!

1) Some are satisfied to stay in the "pig sty" if it means they can have another drink! Alcohol so controls their lives that they would rather have it than the Lord. Remember, "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*" (**Prov. 20:1**). There are a lot of "unwise" people around today!

2) Some are satisfied to stay in the "pig sty" if it means that they can be like the world. If they can dress like the world, talk, think, act, and die like the world, then they are satisfied. The apostle John showed us, "*The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of*

God abideth for ever" (**I Jn. 2:17**). Why would we wish to be like the world when we can strive for that which is higher, nobler, and better and be with God one day? This shows the pull that the world has on us that we must resist!

3) Some are satisfied to stay in the "pig sty" if it means that they can still listen to their "favorite" teacher. It matters little to some whether or not this one is teaching the truth of God's word! "Just give me good ol' brother so-and-so" is their cry, without any regard for whether or not this "brother" holds fast the pattern of sound words (**II Tim. 1:13**)! Have we become complacent in this area of our spiritual lives?

4) Some are satisfied to stay in the "pig sty" if it means that they can have a "soothed conscience." If a preacher preaches the truth (**II Tim. 4:2**), and does so as a "*good minister*" of the gospel (**I Tim. 4:6**), reminding people from whence they have fallen (**II Pet. 1:12-15**), then this man is considered by those in the "pig sty" to be "offensive," "rude," "a meddler," and someone for whom they have little or no respect! How sad, when this same one is respected and loved by the most high God, because he is doing what he is supposed to do (Remember **Heb. 11:38**)!

5) Some are satisfied to stay in the "pig sty" if it means that they can wallow in their denominational dogma, their creedal crutches, or their pseudo-unity, in which they "put aside" various differences for a time, but return to them when in the "safety" of their own meeting houses! The Bible says that true unity can be had! Yet, it comes only when we lay down these man-made opinions and philosophies, and unite under the blood-stained banner of the cross, to rely only and solely upon the book of God for our guidance (**Col. 3:17**). Yes, there can be unity. In fact, it is commanded (**I Cor. 1:10**). But, unity only comes when we agree to follow the right standard. True Bible unity is not attained by following what our parents did or did not do, by simply doing what we like or avoiding what we do not like. Nor is unity based upon what society approves, or does not approve!!

Conclusion

Yes, God calls those who are His children to a higher and nobler standard. He calls us to that which is better. Seeing that the New Testament is a "*better covenant, which was established upon better promises*" (**Heb. 8:6**), doesn't it make sense that His people would be called to a higher, better standard!

Don't you want to be a part of this? If so, why not start today by becoming a Christian. Do not listen to what the

Continued on Page Four