

Sunday School Notes 10-18-2020
Chapter 21 of the WCF

1. The light of nature shows that there is a God who has lordship and sovereignty over all, that he is good and does good to all, and that he ought therefore to be feared, loved, praised, prayed to, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God has been instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations or devisings of men, or the suggestions of Satan, or under any visible representation, or any other way not commanded in Holy Scripture.

2. Religious worship is to be given to God alone—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is not to be given to angels, saints, or any other creature. And since the Fall, worship is not to be given except through a mediator, nor is it to be given through any mediator other than Christ.

3. Prayer with thanksgiving is a special part of religious worship and is required by God of all men. In order that prayer may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, and according to his will. Prayer is to be offered with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance. If vocal, it must be offered in a language that is understood.

4. Prayer is to be made for things that are lawful and for all kinds of men now alive or who will live at a later time. But it is wrong to pray for the dead or for those known to have committed the sin unto death.

5. The various elements of the ordinary religious worship of God are the reading of the Scriptures with reverence; the sound preaching and conscientious hearing of the Word in obedience to God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; the singing of psalms with grace in the heart; and the proper administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ. Also, on special occasions and at appropriate times, there are other elements of worship, namely, religious oaths, vows, solemn fasts, and thanksgivings. These are to be used in a holy and devout manner.

6. Under the gospel, neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship is now limited to—or made more acceptable by—any particular place where it is performed or toward which it is directed. On the contrary, God is to be worshiped everywhere in spirit and truth. He should be worshiped daily in families, and privately by individuals, and with greater solemnity in public worship services. Such worship services are not to be carelessly or willfully neglected or forsaken when God by his Word or his providence calls people to them.

7. As it is the law of nature that, in general, a proper proportion of time ought to be set apart for the worship of God, so God in his Word—by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages—has specifically appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath to be kept holy to him. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, the appointed Sabbath was the last day of the week. Beginning with the resurrection of Christ, the Sabbath was changed to the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord's day, a day to be continued until the end of the age as the Christian Sabbath.

8. This Sabbath is then kept holy to the Lord when men, after due preparation of their hearts and arranging of their common affairs beforehand, not only observe a holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts concerning their everyday occupations and recreations, but also devote the whole time to the public and private exercises of God's worship and to the duties of necessity and mercy.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does Scripture teach us about the character of God and how we ought to respond to Him? (Acts 17:24, Psalm 119:68, Mark 12:33) Compare this with how people actually do respond. In what ways would you like to grow?
2. What does it mean to worship God alone, but not worship alone? Does any scripture come to mind to support your answer?
3. How important is prayer in worship? What should be some of the characteristics of our prayers?
4. How does Scripture encourage the reading of God's Word in both public and private worship? What practical steps can you take to follow in this direction?
5. What are all the aspects of public worship? Which one do you find easiest, which one do you find the most enjoyable, which one do you have questions about? (see sec. 5)
6. What does Scripture teach us about how and why we would receive the Sacraments? How does the confession express this?
7. What does the confession say about Family worship? Discuss how your family can join in prayer (example: Lord's Prayer) and how you can implement that in the rhythm of your week. Perhaps you do this already, how is it going?
8. What does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy? What promise comes along with this? (Ex. 20:8, 10-11, Isaiah 56:2, 4, 6-7)
9. How does Scripture characterize the Sabbath day? What does it look like to rest in God? Does this require faith, discipline, sacrifice from you and your family? How can you frame your Sabbath day around God's design?