

Text: Exod. 34:18-26

Title: The “Dos” of True Worship

Time: August 4, 2024 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: I found an article about the “dos” and “don’ts” for eating at a restaurant with proper etiquette. The “dos” were (1) be polite to your server; (2) chew with your mouth closed; and (3) leave a tip. The “don’ts” were (1) do not order the most expensive item on the menu; (2) do not talk on the cell phone at the table; and (3) do not assume that someone else is paying for your meal.

Our passage this morning contains some detailed instruction regarding the worship practices of God’s people, the nation of Israel. They are recovering from their great sin, the worship of the golden calf in chapter 32. Here in chapter 34, the Lord begins by letting His people know that the golden calf was one of the major “don’ts” of true worship (vv. 12-17). The list of “don’ts” culminates in the command to make never again a molten god like the golden calf (v. 17).

Now with those “don’ts” of worship well established, the Lord next instructs His people about the “dos” of true worship. That His people understand His expectations for their worship of Him is a great concern of the holy God of Exodus, the God we have come to worship this morning. We must understand the “dos” and “don’ts” of true worship.

We have said that *Exodus* means *the way out*, and that its theme is deliverance or redemption. The first four chapters tell us about Israel’s need for deliverance and God’s provision of a deliverer in Moses. Then the historical account of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt is given in chapters 5-18 with the ten plagues. Finally, the last section of the book, chapters 19-40, tell us what the life of the delivered or redeemed should be. It is a covenantal life, a lawful life, and a worshipping life.

So, as those delivered from the Egypt of our sin and our enemy's kingdom of darkness, as the redeemed of the Lord, we too lead a life that should be faithful to our covenant, lawful, and worshipful. Our Deliverer and Redeemer, the One better than Moses or Aaron, Whom Hebrews calls the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ, deserves no less.

As we continue to learn what it means for us to have a worshipful life, I want to note five "dos" of true worship from our passage this morning.

I. Do gather together for true worship (vv. 18-23; worship is corporate).

Illustration: A football player is a football player because he is on a football team, not merely because he plays football individually. He may work on his game as an individual, but he will be in the game only if he is playing with his team. Unlike golf, without a team, there is no game of football.

Application: Biblical worship works in a similar way. The Lord has outlined some parameters that define the game of worship, which is, of course, no game. One of these parameters is God's desire that our worship of Him be done corporately, together in assembly with other believers. God wants us to gather for worship. It has become popular today to have "worship teams" in churches, but Scripture is clear that the whole congregation of the local church is the worship team.

Israel was a nation that was to gather together three times in a year, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread or Passover, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, and the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles. As a New Testament local church, the Lord directs us to gather together for worship each Sunday. Heb. 10:19-25 is the classic New Testament instruction, which from the beginning the disciples of Christ obeyed Sunday after Sunday.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised). And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

That passage speaks of *our* worship, not merely *my* worship (“Let us”; not “May you”). We draw near, hold fast, and consider how to meet each other’s needs while assembling together. Absenteeism from worship gatherings had become problematic even in this early stage of the Jerusalem church’s history (“as the manner of some is”), but the day of the Lord’s coming was still approaching, which meant they needed to gather more, not less (“and so much the more as ye see the day approaching”). Luke (likely) reminds them they could do better: “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak” (Heb. 6:9). Worship is corporate. Do gather together for true worship.

II. Do recognize the firstborns in true worship (vv. 19-20; worship is a privilege).

Illustration: I am the firstborn of the Jack and Carolyn Hobi family. I have four siblings, all of whom are younger than I am, one nearly 20 years younger. Growing up, I felt that I often got more blame for things, and that may have been true because, as the oldest, my parents’ expectations for me would have been naturally higher than for my younger brother and sisters.

My younger siblings, however, would always emphasize that they were not allowed to do things that I was able to do, that as the firstborn I was privileged in some ways.

Application: An important part of the Passover week each year was the dedication of the firstborns. It was done at Passover because the firstborns of Israel had been saved by the blood of the Passover lamb from the death-angel of the tenth plague, which killed all the firstborns of the Egyptians, causing Pharaoh to finally free God's enslaved people. Redemption is a theme that occurs here, because Israel's freedom from slavery through the sacrifice of the Passover lamb was a redemption that symbolizes the believer's freedom from the bondage of his sin through his Lamb's sacrifice, the work of Christ on Calvary.

So, the redeemed of the Lord are the Lord's firstborns. Heb. 12:22-24, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn [literally *firstborns*, i.e., a reference to believers], which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

And so true worship is a privilege of the firstborns of God, the redeemed. Only they can understand the debt of love they owe. Only they can be like the healed leper of Luke 17, who was the only one of ten who returned to give thanks to the Lord. Jesus asked, "Were there not ten healed? Where then are the nine?" Do we see that returning to worship the Lord as a thankful group of believers each week is a privilege that belongs only to those lepers who have been healed, to the redeemed, to the firstborns? Do we recognize the firstborns in true worship? Do remember what a privilege it is for us to be here in the Lord's presence this morning.

III. Do stop earning money and instead give it to truly worship (vv. 21, 26; worship is a sacrifice).

Illustration: We have had some nursing babies in the Hobi family. It is a blessing to contemplate how God has given a mother's milk as the best food for a little dependent child who cannot eat on his own. Farmers know this is true for their livestock as well.

Application: Why does the Lord prohibit boiling a kid in its mother's milk, and why does he do so right after telling the Israelites to be generous with their income? I believe that the Lord is saying, "What I have created for the nourishment of your young, do not use to destroy them." And it seems as though in this context, the Lord is focused especially on His nourishing monetary and financial provision for our families. Although our money is a blessing from the Lord, the love of money is still the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10), and when this money, which God has given us to nourish our families, becomes something we love more than we should, we begin to use for evil what God has meant for our family's good.

This "do" of true worship helps protect us from this spiritual danger in particular. To guard the hearts of His people against the love of money, God instructs them not to work on the sabbath to earn more money and to bring the first-fruits to the priests and Levites as an offering for their support.

Today, we no longer avoid working on the Sabbath, but it is still true that we cannot worship the Lord in a local church service and earn money at the same time. We cannot put a dollar in the offering plate and also spend that same dollar on something else we want. True worship is a financial sacrifice in both of these ways. We have to stop earning money to take time to worship, and we have to give generously to support the work of the ministry. True worship is a financial sacrifice,

and it is this feature of true worship that guards our hearts from the love of money, which is the root of all evil.

IV. Do seek God's blessing through true worship (v. 24; worship invites God's blessing on a land).

Illustration: Alexis de Tocqueville was a French nobleman who spent nine months in the early 19th century touring America to understand our nation's greatness. He wrote his conclusions in a two-volume work titled *Democracy in America*. Chapter 15 of that work is called, "How Religious Belief Sometimes Diverts the Thoughts of Americans Toward Spiritual Pleasures." He wrote this in that chapter:

"In the United States on the seventh [i.e., first—Sunday] day of the week, trade and industry seem suspended throughout the nation; all noise ceases. A deep peace, or rather a sort of solemn contemplation, takes its place. The soul regains its own domain and devotes itself to meditation.

"On this day, places of business are deserted; each citizen goes to church accompanied by his children and there he listens to strange speech apparently little suited to his ear. He is regaled with the countless evils caused by pride and covetousness. He hears of the need to control his desires, of the subtle pleasures of virtue alone, and the true happiness they bring.

"Having returned home, he does not hurry back to his business ledgers. He opens the Holy Scriptures and discovers the sublime or touching depictions of the greatness and goodness of the Creator, the infinite magnificence of God's handiwork, the lofty destiny reserved for man, his duties, and his claims to everlasting life.

"Thus it is that from time to time the American hides away to some degree from himself and, snatching a momentary respite from those trivial passions which agitate his life and the

fleeting concerns which invade his thoughts, he suddenly bursts into an ideal world where all is great, pure, and eternal.

“Elsewhere in this book I have pointed out the causes which buttress the maintenance of American political institutions, and religion appeared to be one of the most important. Treating the Americans again in their individual capacity, religion again comes into the picture and I see that it is no less valuable to each citizen than to the whole state.”

Application: The Lord tells Israel that true worship would help their nation survive. He tells us the same. Will we be a people who believe Him and let our fellow Americans know how important true worship is to our nation? In a uni-party world of churchless Democrats and Republicans, America needs a let’s-get-back-to-church party.

V. Do reverence the blood of the sacrifice in true worship (v. 25; worship under the shed blood of Christ).

Application: The Lord reverences the blood of the sacrifice for our sins – no leaven and no leftovers. So must we remove leaven from our lives and the leftover vestiges of life without Christ. Peter tells us how to do that in 1 Peter 1:13-19:

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by

tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

We reverence the blood of the sacrifice in true worship by living holy lives. True worshippers worship to be holy.

Conclusion: Are you one of these? Have you come to truly worship? The “dos” of true worship are both doable and necessary in view of the worthiness and power of the precious blood of Christ shed for our sins.

We must gather together, because true worship is worship in assembly; we must recognize the firstborns, because true worship is an amazing privilege; we must stop earning and start giving, because true worship is a sacrifice; we must seek God’s blessing, because true worship can save a nation; and we must reverence the blood of Christ, because true worship is the worship of a holy God by a holy people. May the Lord help us to become a true worshipper of Him.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*