

Thoughts From Other Minds:

2. We may be perfectly sure that God will never forget any work of faith or labour of love, performed by us with right motives, v. 1. Our toils in his cause may be wearisome, and our care for the building up of Zion consuming, but God will ever be mindful of it.
5. It is lawful for us to bind ourselves by the most solemn engagements to be the Lord's, and to serve him in any Scriptural way. Calvin: "To vow unto God that which he himself has declared to be agreeable to him, is a commendable practice." Henry: "When needful work is to be done for God, it is good for us to task ourselves, and tie ourselves to a time, because we are apt to put off." Amesius: "Right religious concern will manifest itself in holy purposes and vows for promoting the worship and glory of God." ...
6. In dealing with God it is important for us to remember that he is mighty, vv. 2, 5, yea, he is almighty. The very moment a Christian doubts the omnipotence of God, he has begun to fall into a snare.
7. A true and spiritual concern for the glory of God and the honour of his worship is both controlling and permanent, vv. 3-5. Pious purposes should not be fitful.
8. When God has promised any good to Zion, though it be in a prophecy never so old, it should be our business to study it, and pray and labour for its fulfilment, just as David understood from Deut. 12:5, that there should be in due time a fixed place for all the tribes to assemble, so he desired to honour God by helping to designate that place, and promote his public united worship, v. 5.
10. It is a happy circumstance when rulers and people, rich and poor, small and great, cordially unite in, maintaining the public worship of God, v. 7. But alas! "there is often a place for prayer, where there is no heart to pray."
11. The godly greatly desire God's presence and the animating tokens thereof in all their attempts to worship him, v. 8. The form without the substance is never satisfactory to the meek of the earth. The common judgment of the godly is that the gracious presence of the Most High amply compensates all their toils and sufferings.
12. God's merciful presence is the life of his true ministers in all ages, vv. 9, 16. Compare Matt. 28:20. The garments of the ancient priesthood were indeed beautiful, but they were worn by many a heartless hypocrite. God's ministers are never clothed, with righteousness and salvation till the Lord vouchsafes the tokens of his love. Henry: "Holiness towards God, and goodness towards all men, are habits for ministers, of the necessity of which there is no dispute."
22. Just as certainly as Christ prevails, so certainly must the wicked be overthrown, and covered with shame, v. 18. Their hopes shall all be vain, their plots frustrated, and themselves undone, unless they speedily repent that they may live'

W S Plumer, Doctrinal and Practical Remarks on Psalm 132, *Psalms*, pp. 1135-36.

Camperdown Noorat Terang Presbyterian Charge

24 January 2016

Sermon: 'Worship Him who is Jealous (text: Psalm 132)

Scripture: Psalm 132:1-18; Acts 2:14-41

Sermon Notes

Introduction: We have seen that in the Bible 'worship' is prostration, submission, to someone or something recognised as a divine being, and that it is dangerously possible to bow to God without bowing the heart.

'Worship' without obedience reveals us as either hypocrites or rebellious sons, and will bring upon us judgment or discipline. We must worship him in the beauty of holiness, set apart by faith in Jesus, and completing holiness in the fear of God.

Psalm 132 is of two oaths—David's oath to the Lord (v. 2) and the Lord's oath to David (v. 11); the first part is the psalmist's prayer (vs. 1, 10); the second part is the Lord's answer, 'yes' (vs. 11, 17-18).

1. Right worship remembered

David's 'hardships' were from his resolve to find a place for the Lord (vs. 2-4), a place for the visible symbol of God's presence, the Ark of the Covenant, which God told Moses to make for the sanctuary: "I will dwell among them." (Ex 25:10-22).

When Eli was High Priest (2 Sam 4:1-7:2) the Philistines defeated Israel and captured the Ark—but the Lord sent such devastation upon them that they sent it back to Israel. Afterwards it was sent to Kiriath Jearim, where it was for twenty years.

David acted to place it again at the centre of the worship of Israel (1 Chron 13:1-4); but instead of the Levites carrying it, they put it on a new cart—and when Uzzah touched it, the Lord struck him dead. So it was only later that (1 Chron 15:2) that David had the Levites carry it to the tent he had pitched for it in Jerusalem.

But David wasn't satisfied; he was living in a proper house, but the Ark was in a tent (1 Chron 17:1ff) - but it was Solomon his son who built a house for the Lord, the Temple in Jerusalem; he took the ark out of the tent David had pitched and put it in the temple and prayed in words like those of this psalm (2 Chron 6:41-42).

The psalmist calls on the Lord to remember David for his zeal that the Lord be worshipped as he had appointed; at his footstool, the Ark, both in the tent and in the Temple (vs. 6-9) - that the Lord would not reject 'his anointed one.'

2. Right worship rewarded

When Solomon prayed that the Lord would not reject his anointed (himself), the Lord filled the Temple with his glory. It seems that the psalmist feared that the Lord would reject his anointed, the reigning Davidic king, and/or that he might not keep his promise to send King Messiah.

How gentle and patient the Lord is with those who trust him, even when their faith is weak; the Lord doesn't mind our complaints if we complain *to* him, not *about* him. The Lord had promised David that his house would continue—but the psalmist is anxious; instead of rebuking him, the Lord affirmed his promise to give hope.

That hope rests on God's oath, that one of his own descendants would sit on his throne—if his sons keep his covenant they would sit on his throne forever. (vs. 11-13). This might seem cold comfort when the king was a covenant-breaker, but the unspoken assurance is that one of his sons would keep the covenant.

This son comes more clearly into view (vs. 17-18). The 'horn' (for strength) and the 'lamp' (for kingship) are fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, Son of God (Lk 1:31-33). So Zion (v. 13) is our heavenly Zion (Heb 12:22-24) and God's resting place is his church; if we are part of it through faith in Jesus, the blessings are ours!

This psalm tells how the people worshipped at, or towards, the Ark, the symbol God had appointed to represent him dwelling with his people. What does it teach us about how we should worship? It teaches us that worship of God must be of him as he has revealed himself, and in the way he has appointed; he is Jealous (Ex 34:14).

If we are to have eternal life, we must know ourselves among those who worship God as he has appointed. These are live issues; 'Christians' disagree about how to worship God; now we have other neighbours who say they are the real worshippers of God—and many are saying that we all worship the God of Abraham.

The promised Son of David has come—and we now know that Temple and Ark pointed to and represented him, for he is 'God with us' (Jn 1:14); the Ark represented the propitiation necessary for God who is holy to dwell with sinners, Jesus is the real propitiation for sins, to be received by faith (Rom 3:23-25).

The New Covenant equivalent of David's zeal for the Ark and the Lord is zeal for Jesus, the real Ark, the real Temple, God with us; if we do not have this zeal, we do not worship God (Jn 5:22-23). So Unitarians and Jehovah's Witnesses and people who worship Allah do not worship God.

This New Covenant zeal for Jesus includes zeal for his saving work, for he is the Saviour; salvation comes through him alone (1 Tim 2:5-6). David was zealous for the symbol of propitiation; Jesus is the real propitiation; his death deals with God's wrath—and the justification that makes possible is by grace and faith (Rom 3:23-25).

In the 16th century the church divided over 'alone'; the Reformers said 'if justification (forgiveness of sins, being declared righteous by God on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ) is by grace and faith, then it is by grace alone, and by faith alone; but the church said, in effect, 'it is by grace and works, by faith and love.'

Sadly, that division continues, because the reasons for it are with us still; David's zeal for the Ark and for the Lord call us to be zealous for him and for the saving truth of his gospel, for Christ alone, for faith alone, for grace alone, so that our worship may be of him, and acceptable to him, so that he will bless us with salvation.

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My Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. What does it mean for you that the Lord is Jealous? Is it different from what it ought to mean for you that the Lord is Jealous? (Ex 20:5, 34:14) Do you empathise with David's oath not to rest till he had found a place for the Lord?
2. Why had the Ark been left so long at Kiriath Jearim? (1 Chron 13:3) Why did David bring it into Jerusalem?
3. David was angry and afraid of the Lord when he struck Uzzah down because he touched the Ark (2 Sam 6:8, 9). Was there any connection between this and what happened at Beth Shemesh? (1 Sam 6:19). Why did the Lord do this? What did David and the people of Israel need to learn?
4. What was the point of the psalmist's prayer? How does the Lord's answer allay his fears, and how was the promise fulfilled? (Lk 1:31-33).
5. How does Jesus fulfil the Ark and the Tabernacle/Temple as symbols or pictures? How does our zeal (or lack of it) for him define whether we truly worship God or not? Why did the Reformers insist on 'alone' in reference to Christ, grace and faith? (cf. Jn 5:22-23; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Rom 3:23-25).