

(True) Religion Begins with Repentance

Isaiah 1:10-20

How do we worship and serve God in a way that pleases God?

God rejects worship that does not flow from the heart and life (1:10-15). God desires a heart that delights in him, desires his glory, and rests in his love. Additionally, God desires a life of obedience. How we worship on Sunday and how we live Monday through Saturday are inseparable.

God requires worship that begins with repentance (1:16-17). Repentance is marked by a deep inward transformation of the heart that leads us to cease from what doesn't please God, learn what does please God, and seek to conform our lives to his will which is revealed to us in His Word. However, we can't do this in our own strength, which is why we need God to provide what he requires.

God provides the worship that he requires in the perfect obedience of His Son (1:18-20). Jesus offered his life in perfect obedience to the Father. Jesus offered himself at the cross as a perfect sacrifice for our sin. The Father is pleased with the life and death of Jesus. The Father's delight was confirmed when Jesus rose from the dead.

In Christ, we have pardon and the gift of Christ's righteousness. We continually receive what God offers in repentance. Jack Miller writes, "To be near God and God be near us is the whole purpose of human life. But without repentance there can be no face to face fellowship with the Father." When we repent, we own that our sins are like scarlet, and we receive that God has made them white as snow in Christ. Gospel-centered repentance is the continual turning from what doesn't please God, receiving God's pardon, and pursuing new life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our worship and service fall short of what God requires, but God provides the worship and service he requires in and through Jesus. God is pleased when we draw near to him trusting in the work of Christ, resting in his love, and giving him the glory for the grace that he has lavished on us. We, then, offer our life in service to the One who served us. The Gospel transforms the way we worship and serve.

Questions for Individuals, Families, and Community Groups

- 1) How does Isaiah 1:10-20 lead you to repent of how you draw near to God in worship? How do you need to repent of how you live outside of 'worship'?
- 2) Is it easy or hard for you to believe the promise of Isaiah 1:18? Why?
- 3) How does the Gospel transform the way you approach your worship and service to God?