

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	Scripture Memory		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	43		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Romans 11:33-36; 1 Chron. 29:10-13		
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GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST (Part II)

“*Morbus Sabbaticus*,’ better known as ‘Sunday sickness,’ is a disease peculiar to some church members. The symptoms vary, but these are generally observed:

1. It never lasts more than twenty-four hours.
2. It never interferes with the appetite.
3. It never affects the eyes. The Sunday newspapers can be read with no pain. Television seems to help the eyes.
4. No physician is ever called.
5. After a few ‘attacks,’ at weekly intervals, it may become chronic . . . even terminal.

“No symptoms are usually felt on Saturday. The patient sleeps well and wakes feeling well. He eats a hearty Sunday breakfast, then the attack comes until services are over for the morning. The patient feels better and eats a solid dinner. After dinner, he takes a nap, then watches one or two football games on TV. He may take a walk before supper, and stop and chat with neighbors. If there are church services scheduled for Sunday evening, he will have another short attack. Invariably, he wakes up Monday morning and rushes off to work feeling refreshed. The symptoms may not recur until the following Sunday, unless another service is scheduled at the church during the week.”¹ A recent study conducted by Pew Research revealed that Americans treat church like a product to consume, and they change churches like homeowners change air filters.² The importance of theology is rarely a factor in picking a church.

Stott observes that, “It is of great importance to note from Romans 1-11 that theology (our belief about God) and doxology (our worship of God) should never be separated. On the one hand, there can be no doxology without theology. It is not possible to worship an unknown god. All true worship is a response to the self-revelation of God in Christ and Scripture, and arises from our reflection on who he is and what he has done. It was the tremendous truths of Romans 1-11 which provoked Paul’s outburst of praise. The worship of God is evoked, informed and inspired by the vision of God. Worship without theology is bound to degenerate into idolatry. Hence, the indispensable place of worship in both public worship and private devotion. It is the Word of God which calls forth the worship of God. On the other hand, there should be no theology without doxology. There is something fundamentally flawed about a purely academic interest in God. God is not an appropriate object for cool, critical, detached, scientific observation and evaluation. No, the true knowledge of God will always lead us to worship, as it did Paul. Our place is on our faces before him in adoration. As I believe Bishop Handley Moule said at the end of the last century, we must ‘beware equally of an undevotional theology and of an untheological devotion.’”³

Sadly, much that passes for *worship* in many professing evangelical churches is theologically vacuous and as such lacking in true devotion. Abraham Kuyper wrote, “We do not say that most people do not worship as well as pray, but we dare express the surmise that the blessed delight of worship is, by

all too many, too little known and sought. And this should not be so. He who seeks the hidden walk, who wills to be near unto God, should not in his prayer-life be too exclusively engaged about himself nor about those who are his, and when he is on his knees before God he should not defer to concern himself about God's glory until the end of his prayer. The knowledge of God lies in worship, far more than in prayer. He who prays for something thinks, first of all, of his own need and want and embarrassment, and loses himself in the Being of his God no further than that with Him there is power and might wherewith He can come to the help of his suppliant's need. On the other hand, he who worships loses himself in God, forgets himself, in order to think of God alone, to let the lustrous beams of God's virtues shine upon him, and to cause to radiate forth from his own soul the reflex of the greatness of God as it mirrors itself in his deeply moved and wonder-wrapped soul. Only when the kingdom of Glory shall have been ushered in on the new earth under the new heaven together with all God's angels, shall we not do otherwise than worship."⁴

1 Chron. 29:10-13 mirrors in many ways Romans 11:33-36: "¹⁰Therefore David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: 'Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. ¹¹Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹²Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.'" David Clarkson, who served alongside of John Owen, highlights David's mode of worship. "It is an ascribing all excellencies to him. Whence we may learn wherein the true praising or blessing of God consists; it lies in acknowledging that to be God's which is his. We can give him nothing, for all is his; we can add nothing to him or his glories by blessing him, he is far above all such praises and blessings; he wants nothing that is excellent, he is all-sufficient of himself, and infinite in all his perfections, and was so from, and will be so to, everlasting. All that men and angels can do is to acknowledge him to be what he is, and to have what he hath. And to do this is to praise or bless him. Thus, when our Lord Jesus is teaching his disciples how to pray, and how to praise the Most High, this is the mode of praising him, Mat. vi. 13, 'Thine is,' &c. And after the same manner does David here praise him.

- A. "'Thine is the greatness.' Thou art immensely, infinitely great, and all other greatness besides is from thee, it is thine.
- B. "'The power.' Thy power is almighty, and the power of all others is derived from thee, and depends altogether upon thee, it is thine.
- C. "'The glory.' Thou art all-glorious, and all other glory is but the shadow of it.
- D. "'The victory.' Thou conquerest all that oppose thee, and givest victory to all that vanquish, the victory is thine.
- E. "'The majesty,' or 'authority' as some render it. Thou hast all authority in heaven and earth, and all that have authority have it from thee; what is not exercised for thee is no authority, and what is duly exercised is thine.
- F. "'The kingdom.' Whoever rules in any realm, the kingdom is thine; O Lord, they do but rule by commission from thee, and as substitutes under thee; thou art supreme governor of them all, thou art exalted as head above all, and, in a word, all is thine, all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine.

"All dominion is here ascribed to God, whether it signify rule, or whether it signal propriety; God is both the ruler of all, and likewise the owner of all."⁵

CONCLUSION: "The willing generosity of the people called forth a prayer of thanksgiving from David. This is no empty gesture, but reflects the deep awareness that it was only because God had so abundantly blessed His people that such offerings could be given. The sense of the whole is that

David and the people have been giving thanks and praising God: **But** (emphatic) (v. 14) what is their status before Him? David proceeds to comment on this in a series of statements. All comes from God, for man is nothing, his days are no more than a transient shadow and lack security (*miqweh* or home abode, which RSV renders 'abiding,' v. 15). God alone is the source of all things and thus He is providing for His own house, but He does so through the willingness of His people to offer themselves and their possessions to Him. David's prayer is that such a continued attitude of dedication to God with loyalty to His commands should mark both Solomon and the people."⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* (Sign of The Times, 1996).

² Chris Sonksen, "When is it ok to quit church?" *Fox News*, July 14, 2018.

³ J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (IVP, 1994), p. 311.

⁴ Abraham Kuyper, *To Be Near Unto God* (rpt. P&R, 1979), p. 556.

⁵ *The Works of David Clarkson I* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1988), p. 365.

⁶ J. K. Howard, 1 Chronicles in *The International Bible Commentary* ed. F. F. Bruce (Zondervan, 1979), p. 459.