

Sanctifying Jehovah in Worship (5) Congregational Prayer

Today we come to another element in the order of worship that is congregational prayer. In terms of the time allocated to it, it only comes behind in preaching and congregational singing. This demonstrates its importance

The Difficulties

Congregational prayer is perhaps one of the most difficult aspect for worship for the minister who leads in prayer and the congregation who prays along with the minister.

This is difficult work as the minister is to lead the holy congregation into the presence of God in the holy of holies. And the congregation needs to concentrate on the prayer and say "amen" when the minister prays. The difficulty can be observed when worshippers take this opportunity to go to the toilet, doze off and worse still, snore. So, we must implore God's help to engage in prayer

Scripture Proof

The Christian should not doubt that prayer is an element of worship. The teaching of prayer and examples of prayer are found in many pages of Holy Writ.

The early church engaged in prayer. Acts 2.42, "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers". The apostle exhorts Timothy to pray in the public worship of God in I Tim. 2.1, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made..." And the church must pray always "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, ... watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:18).

Our Godly Attitudes to Prayer

Firstly, it must be stressed that the minister who prays during the congregational prayer is not praying alone but rather, he prays on behalf of the congregation. This is the reason why it is called congregational prayer. As such, we should pay attention to what he prays as he is praying on our behalf. And he also prays for the specific needs of the members in the congregation.

Second, we must realise that we are in the presence of God, into the most holy place.

Third, we must participate in this prayer by saying "amen" to the prayers of the minister on behalf of the congregation. This is a great encouragement to the minister who prays, as he knows that he is not alone in his prayers.

Fourth, we pray with humility and have utter dependence upon the Lord

Fifth, one way that can help us to have the proper attitude to prayer be to realise that we are coming before the holy God. Jehovah is the Holy One and the Righteous One. And as such, we ought to come to prayer and in fact for

the whole Worship Service with reverence and awe. And we must begin with confessing our sins before God and praying that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all our sins. And that He will usher us into the very presence of God and ask the Lord to show favour to us as we worship Him and speak to us through the preaching of His Word.

May the Lord teach us how to pray.

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