

Careful About Worship; Serves God, Not Man

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Well, we're continuing in our study of Thomas Watson's book, The Godly Man's Picture. And today we're going to go through two more sections in that book.

! A godly man is very exact and careful about the worship of God, and a godly man is a servant of God, not a servant of men. So the first section, a godly man is very exact and careful about the worship of God.

I won't spend a lot of time on this point because Watson's concern in this section is not so much that the godly man is very exact and careful in his personal worship of God, but that he be very exact and careful about his place of corporate worship, the church.

Watson wrote from a certain historical context where, in the 17th century, the great enemy of the Protestant Presbyterian Church of that day was the Roman Church.

Watson's concern was that a godly man be a part of a body of believers that adhered to true biblical worship, untainted by the superstitions and rituals and traditions he saw so prevalent in the Church of Rome.

[1 : 2 0] As Watson says, A godly man reverences divine institutions and is more for the purity of worship than the pomp. Mixture in sacred things is like a dash in the wine, which, though it gives it a color, yet only adulterates it.

So the godly man must be very exact and careful about where he practices corporate worship. And that's true of godly men and women today.

While the 21st century Reformed Baptist Church isn't as concerned with the same hot-button issues that Watson was in his day, it's nevertheless the godly man's responsibility to ensure that the church where he attends is one where Christ is lifted up to the honor of God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit.

That which was pomp in Watson's day and age in many ways has been replaced by the entertainment-based worship found in so many seeker-sensitive churches today.

Before coming to Grace Fellowship, Billy and I attended such a church for a few years. And I'm here to tell you that the house band there really knew how to rock.

[2 : 3 9] They really did. They knew just what it took to get the congregation swaying and clapping and singing. But the problem was you never actually heard the congregation singing because they were drowned out by the band and the worship singers on stage.

Very few seemed to care because, well, it was all pretty entertaining and was a hard act for the pastor to follow. So we usually got user-friendly messages that mainly addressed people's felt needs.

Their church hadn't always been that way, but for whatever reason, they felt that that was the direction they needed to go in order to stay relevant. What a difference when Billy and I came to Grace Fellowship where we could actually be a part of a congregation, where we could hear the congregation singing, singing Christ-exalting, God-honoring hymns and spiritual songs, all of which was followed by Bible-based, gospel-centered preaching that always pointed people to Jesus.

Still, even here, the godly man and woman mustn't become complacent in worship. Listen to Paul's words to his young prodigy, Timothy.

This is from 2 Timothy 4, verses 2 through 4. Preach the word.

[4 : 34] The godly man will not come among his brothers and sisters in corporate worship with his own personal agenda and desires about what he wants to hear and how he wants to worship.

Rather, he'll come with a humble heart, ready to hear Bible-based truths that cause him to rise up in Christ-exalting, God-honoring worship.

Of course, we mustn't forget the Bereans. They were commended in Acts 17 and 11 as people who received the word with eagerness and examined the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

I think we all have that same responsibility today as members of God's church. So pray for your pastors. Pray for your worship leaders.

Pray that in all that is said and done here, that the word would be faithfully preached and that all of our praise and worship would be to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ and God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit.

[5 : 44] Well, the second section is, A godly man is a servant of God, not a servant of men. And Watson divides up what he has to say in this section into those two basic parts.

A godly man is a servant of God. A godly man is not a servant of men. So first of all, we'll look at how Christians are servants of God.

As we learned in the series on the Christian's identity, before we were convinced, converted rather, before we came to saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, what were we servants of?

That's a question for you. What were we servants of? Satan. That answers the question who we were servants of.

But under his service, what did we serve? And why did we serve ourselves? We were servants of what?

[6 : 50] Sin. That's right, sin. Sin was our master, and we were sin servants. When our master spoke, we usually obeyed.

But now, since conversion, we've forsaken that old master, and we're servants of another master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Watson then asked the question, In what sense is a godly man a servant of God? His answer, a godly man is a servant of God in seven respects.

And the first is this. A servant leaves all others and confines himself to one master. We were once sin servants.

Whether we recognized it or not, we loved our master, and we served him well. And if we had continued to serve that master, we would have gotten the most pathetic wages imaginable, death, eternal death in hell.

[7 : 53] But now we've left that master, and we have a new one, God. Romans 6.22, We've been set free from sin, and we are now slaves of God.

But Siddon doesn't like to give up his slaves. He wants them back, and will do everything in his power to get them back. But the Holy Spirit puts within us a desire to love our new master and serve him alone.

Sure, the old master tries to call us back, and sometimes we get careless and listen to him, don't we? But through God's Spirit working in us and in our hearts, our true desire is to love our new master, Jesus, and to be confined to his service and his alone.

In the Old Testament nation of Israel, a Hebrew could, for various reasons, become slaves of another Hebrew. But his slavery was only to last for six years.

In the seventh year, he was to be set free. But sometimes the Hebrew slave would love the family he served so much that he wanted to stay with him for life.

[9 : 09] So as it says in Deuteronomy 15, 16, But if your slave says to you, I don't want to leave you because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, take an awl and pierce through his ear into the door, and he will become your slave for life.

He was then dedicated to serve that family for the rest of his life. Well, that's how we should look at our service to God. Our ear has been pierced to the door for our new master, and we are his for life.

We are dedicated to him and to him alone. The second sense in which a godly man is a servant of God is that a servant is not independent at his own disposal, but is at the disposal of his new master.

A servant must not do what he pleases, but must be at the will of his master. Thus a godly man is God's servant.

He is wholly at God's disposal. Being God's servant is not a nine-to-five job. We have a lot of roles that demand our attention every day.

[10 : 27] We're employers or employees. We're moms and dads, husbands and wives. We're voters. We're homemakers.

We're caretakers. Many roles and responsibilities that claim our time every day. Going through life, we can move in and out of many of those roles.

But we always have to be cognizant of the fact that hovering over all of those roles and responsibilities is the constant reality that we are God's servants, and that has to always impact how we conduct ourselves in those roles and responsibilities.

As God's servants, we are always, always at our master's disposal, regardless of whatever role we happen to be engaged in at the time.

We must always be at God's disposal. The third sense in which a godly man is a servant of God is that he is bound. He's bound to his master.

[11 : 34] As David said in Psalm 119 and verses 105 and 106, Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. I have solemnly sworn to keep your righteous judgments.

Watson says, There are agreements and indentures sealed between him, the servant, and his master. At our baptism is when we officially bind ourselves to our new master.

As our confession of faith says in the section on baptism, To those baptized, It is a sign of their fellowship with him, Jesus, in his death and resurrection, of their being grafted into him, of remission of sins, and of submitting themselves to God through Jesus Christ to live and walk in newness of life.

So it's at baptism that we truly bind ourselves to our new master, Jesus, for the remainder of our lives and then on into eternity.

The fourth sense in which a godly man is a servant of God is that he not only wears his master's uniform, but does his master's work.

[12 : 55] Thus, a godly man works for God. Paul told the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 12.15 that I will most gladly spend and be spent for you.

And he told them again in 1 Corinthians 15.9-10, For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God, but by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.

On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. So a godly man is active for God until his last breath.

Yes, we do get to do things to rejuvenate, don't we? Like sleep, maybe a vacation to recharge the batteries. Billy and I, Lord willing, are heading out next Saturday for two weeks in Florida, a chance to recharge our batteries.

But for the Christian, a vacation can't be an end in itself, a chance to escape working for God for a while. The goal is to re-energize in order to be ready to do more work for God and even to be ready to work for God while on vacation, if your master calls you to do so.

[14 : 28] Doesn't a servant of the Lord ever get to truly rest? Yes. You've known many in this church who are resting right now. Revelation speaks of it in chapter 14.

In verse 13, Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, so they will rest from their labors, since their works follow them.

So until that time, we work. We work for our master, Jesus. The fifth sense in which a godly man is a servant of God is that a servant follows his master.

The world will follow virtually anything and anyone that is not Jesus. The apostle Peter, in his second letter, listed quite a few things that the ungodly love to follow.

Rather than Christ. Notice that in 2 Peter 1, verse 16, Peter says, For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[15 : 49] In this world's religions, people follow a lot of cleverly contrived myths. But Peter says, That's not how we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And then over in chapter 2, in verse 2, he said, Many will follow their depraved ways, and the way of truth will be maligned because of them.

And then down in verses 9 through 10, The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, especially those who follow the polluting desires of the flesh and despise authority.

Verse 15, Speaking of the ungodly, Peter says, They have gone astray by abandoning the straight path and have followed the path of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of wickedness.

And then finally, if you turn over to chapter 3, you'll see this in verse 3, Above all, be aware of this, scoffers will come in the last days, scoffing and following their own desires.

[17 : 04] Speaking of the last days, the very last days before Jesus returns, who is it that the world follows after? Well, we see it over in the book of Revelation.

In chapter 13, John sees a beast who gets all of his power and authority from the dragon. In verse 3, John says, One of its heads appeared to be fatally wounded, but its fatal wound was healed.

The whole earth was amazed and followed the beast. But in the next chapter, John speaks of the 144,000, and he says, Of them, in verse 4, These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

This is the walk of the godly man and woman, following Jesus wherever he leads. As Watson says, The godly man wants to tread in the steps of Christ.

If a master leaps over hedge and ditch, the servant will follow him. A godly man will follow Christ through afflictions, and then he quotes Luke 9.23, If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me.

[18 : 20] So following Jesus isn't always going to be easy, but that's the assignment of the godly man and the godly woman, following Jesus through thick and thin.

Jesus said in John 12.25, just days before his crucifixion, The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me. Where I am, there my servant also will be. If anyone serves me, the father will honor him.

So the godly servant will follow his master Jesus. The sixth sense in which a godly man is a servant of God is that a servant is satisfied with his master's allowance.

And here I'll just quote Watson because he sums it up pretty well. He does not say, I will have such provisions made ready.

[19 : 26] If he has meager fare, he does not find fault. He knows he is a servant and accepts his master's carving. In this sense, a godly man is God's servant.

He is willing to live on God's allowance. If he has only some leftovers, he does not grumble. Paul knew he was a servant. Therefore, whether more or less fell to his share, he was indifferent.

When Christians complain at their condition, they forget that they are servants and must live on the allowance of their heavenly master. You who have the least grace from God are debtors to his mercy.

So contentment is the key word here. The servant is content with his master's provision. He isn't a grumbler, always wishing that he had more than the master has given him.

He trusts in the wise providence of his master that he's given his servant exactly what he needs to serve him most effectively at any given time in his life.

[20 : 37] Well, the seventh sense in which a godly man is a servant of God is that a servant will stand up for the honor of his master. Again, it's hard to improve on what Watson says in this regard.

He says, and I quote, He cannot hear his master reproached, but will vindicate his credit. Thus, every godly man will stand up for the honor of his master Christ.

My zeal has consumed me, it says in Psalm 119, verse 139. A servant of God stands up for his truths. Some can hear God's name reproached and his ways spoken against, yet remain silent.

God will be ashamed of such servants and reject them before men and angels. When you hear the idea of God's existence ridiculed, when you hear Jesus mocked, when you hear his truths watered down and made light of, when you hear his standards of moral behavior tossed aside as archaic and intolerant and bigoted, when you hear these things, then it's time to stand up for your master.

The one who shed his blood to redeem you. Well, we've seen what it means to be a servant of God, what it entails.

[22 : 06] Next, Watson addresses the question, why would I want to be a servant of God? Well, the first reason is because God is the best master.

There is simply no master like God. Here are just a few of the things God does for his servants. He keeps all his promises. Notice it in 1 Kings 8.

This is at Solomon's dedication of the temple. He says in verse 23, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below.

You keep the gracious covenant with your servants who walk before you with all their heart. And then down in verse 56, blessed be the Lord.

He has given rest to his people, Israel, according to all he has said. Not one of all the good promises he made through his servant Moses has failed.

[23 : 08] God is the best master because he keeps his promises. God is the best master because he is sweet and gracious to his servants.

He is slow to anger and always ready to forgive. When we are in need, he relieves us. When we are weak, he pities us.

God is the best master because he reveals his secrets to his servants. What master does that? Slaves and servants of worldly masters have one purpose, to do what they are told.

The worldly master doesn't take his slaves into his confidence, but our master does. Notice it in Psalm 25. In verse 14, David says, The secret counsel of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he reveals his covenant to them.

And again in Proverbs 3.32, we read, For the Lord detests the perverse, but takes the upright into his confidence. Well, God is the best master because, incredibly, he waits on his servants.

[24 : 25] Was there ever such a master? Jesus tells his servants in Luke 12.37, Blessed will be those servants the master finds alert when he comes.

Truly I tell you, he will get ready, have them recline at the table, then come and serve them. And God is the best master because he never forgets his servants.

As Watson says, Other masters may forget their servants, and cast them off when they are old, but God will not. And then he quotes Isaiah 44.21.

Remember these things, Jacob and Israel, for you are my servant. I formed you. You are my servant. Israel, you will never be forgotten by me.

So the first reason why we serve God is because he is the best master. It is a slander to say that God is a hard master.

[25 : 28] Now the second reason why the godly man should want to be God's servant is because God's service is the best service.

Well, why is that? What is there about being in God's service that makes his service the best? Well, Watson lists six privileges of being in God's service.

Six reasons why God's service is the best. And the first is freedom. In other words, though the saints are bound to God's service, yet they serve him freely.

The Lord redeemed his servants at great cost, the greatest cost, his own son. But he freely offers that redemption to all who will receive it.

And then having redeemed his servants, God gives them his spirit, who makes them free and cheerful in obedience. As Watson says, the spirit carries them on the wings of delight.

[26 : 34] He makes duty a privilege. He enlarges the heart in love and fills it with joy. God's servants are overjoyed to fill such a master and do it freely with their whole heart.

That's why the first reason why God's service is the best service. The second reason why God's service is the best service is that it brings honor.

David, even though he was the king of Israel, confessed in Psalm 154, 12, I am your servant. Notice how Paul speaks of himself in the opening verse of the book of Romans.

Paul would have been quite truthful if he opened his letter to the Romans with something like, Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, or Paul of the tribe of Benjamin.

But no, says Paul, I am Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ. For Paul, that was the only title that gave him any honor whatsoever.

[27 : 41] To be a servant, a slave of the one who redeemed him, Christ himself, who is equal with the Father, still was not ashamed of the title servant.

You see this in Isaiah 53, 11, where it says, After his anguish, he will see light and be satisfied. By his knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many, my righteous servant, and he will carry their iniquities.

Why is it such an honor to be God's servant? Because every servant of God is also a son. Watson says, It is more honor to serve God than to have kings serve us.

Before God created humanity, whom did he create? Well, his mighty angels, Michael, Gabriel, the cherubim, and seraphim, and all the hosts of heaven.

And for what purpose? Well, the writer of the book of Hebrews answers in the first chapter when he says, Are they not all ministering spirits set out to serve those who are going to inherit salvation?

[28 : 57] What honor God gives to his servants to be served by his holy angels as God's own sons. The third reason why God's service is the best service is that we serve in safety.

In John 10, 28, Jesus is speaking of his sheep, his servants, and he says this about them. I will give them eternal life, and they will never perish.

No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

So God's servants are eternally safe. No one is able to snatch them out of Jesus' hand, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. God takes care of his servants.

He gives them protection. Whenever you want to be reassured about God's protection over his servants, read the 91st Psalm. Just read the whole thing.

[30 : 00] The Psalm starts out with these words. The one who lives under the protection of the Most High dwells in the shadow of the Almighty. The remainder of the Psalm goes on with promise after promise, one reassurance after another, that God will protect his servants.

The Bible is full of such reassurances that God watches over and protects his people. The fourth reason why God's service is the best service is that there is great gain in God's service.

In Malachi 3.14, we see the ungodly and unbelievers saying this, It is useless to serve God. What have we gained by keeping his requirements?

Even those who trust in Christ can sometimes fall into this way of thinking. I'm sure you all remember Asaph in Psalm 73. He saw the prosperity of the wicked and began to envy them for all the good things and advantages they seem to get in this life.

And he began to wonder in verse 13 of that Psalm, Did I purify my heart and wash my hands in innocence for nothing?

[31 : 20] In other words, where is the gain in being God's servant? It wasn't until Asaph entered God's sanctuary that he saw the end of the wicked.

If you're ever tempted to think that way, you need to, as Pastor Aaron said last week, be faithfully week after week in the New Covenant sanctuary, the church.

There you'll hear every Sunday the incredibly good news of what God has done for his servants through Christ. The solution to envying the wicked is hearing the gospel over and over and over.

Well, there's a promotion day for us, and Jesus himself is looking forward to your promotion day, the greatest gain of all, the day when you realize that greatest gain of all, and the greatest gain that comes as a result of being in God's service.

He says in John 17, 24, Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the world's foundation.

[32 : 35] The fifth reason why God's service is the best service is that God helps us in our work. What master does that? Worldly masters tell their servants what to do, but do they lift a finger to help them?

Not on your life. But our master in heaven gives us not only work, but strength to do his work. Isaiah 40, verses 29 through 31 is a familiar passage to many of you.

He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not become weary. They will walk and not faint. Watson says, The Lord not only fits work for us, but fits us for our work.

With his command, he gives enablement. The sixth reason why God's service is the best service is that he supplies everything we need to serve him most effectively.

[33 : 57] A master will not let his servants be in need. Our good shepherd supplies all the needs of his flock. Watson says, Does God give us a Christ, and will he deny us a crust?

Paul said in Philippians 4, 18 through 19, But I have received everything in full, and I have an abundance. I am fully supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you provided, a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. So the sixth reason that God's service is the best service is that our master supplies everything we need to serve him most effectively.

Watson concludes this section with this question, Oh then, who would not be in love with God's service? And all of that was to demonstrate the second reason why a godly man should want to be in God's service, because his service is the best service.

Watson offers a third reason why the godly man or woman should want to be in God's service, and that is simply this. God has engaged us to serve him. Watson is clear about this.

[35 : 19] We are bought with a price. This is a metaphor taken from such as ransom captives from prison by paying a sum of money for them. They are to be at the service of those who ransom them.

So when the devil had taken us prisoners, Christ ransomed us with a price, not of money, but of blood. Therefore, we are to be only at his service.

If any can lay a better claim to us than Christ, we may serve them. But Christ, having the best right to us, we are to cleave to him and enroll ourselves forever in his service.

Now, I said at the very beginning of this section of the godly man's service to God that Watson divides up what he has to say in this section into two basic parts.

A godly man is a servant of God. A godly man is not a servant of men. So let's look briefly at that second statement. A godly man is not the servant of men.

[36 : 25] As Watson quotes 1 Corinthians 7.23, You are bought at a price. Do not become slaves of people.

Well, the fact is there were many Christians in Paul days who were converted and were slaves of men, and there wasn't a whole lot that many of them could do about it. So what does it mean, do not become slaves of people?

John MacArthur is helpful when he says in his study Bible about this verse, this refers to sinful slavery, that is, becoming slaves to the ways of men, the ways of the world and of the flesh.

This is the slavery about which to be concerned. So there is a sort of service that we owe to men, and there's a sort of service that we do not want to owe to men.

Watson then lists the threefold ways in which we might serve men. Two are good, and one is not so good. First, there is a civil service we owe to men as the inferior to the superior.

[37 : 35] He's not talking about quality here. He's talking about what Watson means is that we go through our day-to-day lives, and there are always people that we have to submit to.

Children have to submit to their parents. For employees, we have to submit to our employers. That is, we want to keep our jobs. As citizens of any country, we have to submit to the laws of the land and show respect to those in authority.

Secondly, Watson says, There is a religious service we owe to men when we are serviceable to their souls. And then he quotes 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 5.

For we are not proclaiming ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

Paul looked upon himself as a servant of the body of Christ in Corinth. He didn't look upon himself as their boss, but as their servant for the sake of their souls.

[38 : 45] The same is true of your pastors here at Grace Fellowship. They're not here to lord it over you, but to be your servants for the sake of your souls.

Even we serve one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. As Paul said in Galatians 6.2, Carry one another's burdens.

In this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. And part of that law of Christ is to love one another as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

In other words, with a subservient and sacrificial love. Third, there is a way of serving men that is a sinful way of serving men.

And there are many ways we can sinfully serve men. We can prefer men's injunctions before God's institutions. God commands one thing.

[39 : 44] Man commands another thing. Man commands another, and we prefer what men say instead of what God says. When men's edicts have more force with us than God's precepts, this is to be the servant of men.

Watson mentions another way that we can sinfully serve men. And he says, and I quote, When we voluntarily prostitute ourselves to the impure lusts of men, we let them lord it over our consciences.

I think in today's vernacular we would call that yielding to political correctness. To be tolerant of what God is not tolerant of.

Watson says, When we are pliable and conformable to any beliefs, when we will be what others will have us to be, then we are like Issachar in Genesis 49.14, who is a strong donkey crouching down between two burdens.

This is not humility, as some would see it, but sordidness, and it is men serving, says Watson. We can do even worse when we advocate what God does not advocate.

[41 : 02] Again, Watson says, When we are advocates in a bad cause, pleading for any impious, unjustifiable act, when we baptize sin with the name of religion, and with our oratory wash the devil's face, this is to be the servants of men.

In these cases, a godly person will not so unman himself as to serve men. He says like Paul, If I yet pleased men, I would not be the servant of Christ.

And like Peter, we ought to obey God rather than men. What does a man get by sinfully enslaving himself?

He gets a blot on his name, a curse on his estate, and a hell on his conscience. So there are ways that we are servants of men, but it mustn't ever contradict or replace our service to our ultimate master, Jesus.

Our allegiance is to him and him alone. So let's serve God joyfully. He's the best master, and his service is the best service.

[42 : 11] Well, we're out of time. We're dismissed. Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir, sir,