

Session 4

August 11, 2019

WORSHIP CONTINUALLY

2 Chronicles 15:10-19

We tend to think of worship as a one-hour ritual each Sunday morning. Even so-called “nontraditional” Baptist churches have very predictable patterns of worship. There is some music, some prayer, a message, and some other elements, usually at the same time, done in the same order, led by the same people. And when the service is over, we all go home until the next time. But God desires more from us than an hour a week devoted to Him. What would it look like if we lived our lives as continual expressions of worship? Our lesson this week provides a glimpse from the life of King Asa. Four characteristics stand out.

Celebration (vv. 10-11). A joyful attitude leads to joyful worship. Everything was going well for King Asa and the people of Judah. The temptation would be to gloat about their victories and rest easy in their prosperity. The verb tense in verse 10 indicates that they gathered *themselves* together. This was not a forced convocation motivated by obligation, but an agreed upon event. Imagine a scenario where you and your family (and your church family) couldn’t wait to join together for worship and were genuinely excited to be there. Perhaps Asa quoted the psalm penned by King David many years before: “I was glad when they said unto me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’” (Ps. 122:1). The celebration that day included a massive sacrifice (v. 11). Why was this event a celebration? First, the date places the worship on or about the Feast of Weeks, a Jewish celebration of bountiful harvest. Second, the sacrifices were made from the plunder of the cities Asa defeated. Rather than hoard them away, King Asa presented them to the Lord, who was responsible for their acquisition in the first place.

Dedication (vv. 12-15). Everybody worships something. In this case, the people publicly committed to worship the One True God, and Him alone. The threat of death (v. 13) should not be seen as forcing the people to bow before God (similar to what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced in Daniel 3); rather, it was a prohibition against worshipping the idols and false gods that had plagued the king’s reign. Again, the dedication was jubilant (v. 14), and complete: it was sworn with all their mind, as God had been sought with all their heart (see the similar wording found in Deut. 6:4-5). With their whole-hearted dedication, God rewarded them once again with “rest” (v. 15).

Demonstration (v. 16). If you live on principles rather than preferences, you will eventually have to make some tough decisions. In keeping with his deep devotion to God, King Asa was faced with the difficult choice of removing his grandmother from her palace position because of her idolatry. Since her continued pagan worship would be grounds for her death (v. 13), the assumption is that she repented and joined with the singular worship of Asa’s One True God. But the condemnation of her idolatry and the utter destruction of the images associated with it demonstrated that since God is not a respecter of persons, neither can His ambassadors be.

Consecration (vv. 17-19). The blunt declaration that “The high places were not taken away from Israel” (v. 17) is a reminder that the continual pursuit of purity and holiness in worship is indeed a process; especially for a nation. Sometimes progress is measured in inches. Other times, it is measured in miles. Either way, progress is progress...and should be celebrated. While the

cleansing of the land was never quite complete, God's good king was lauded. Two specific commendations are offered: first, unlike those who came before him, Asa was wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord, and stayed that way his entire life (v. 17). Second, those treasures through which both the king and his kingdom had been enriched, were consecrated to the God who gave them. The result was an extended period of uncharacteristic peace in an era of almost continual strife.