

God Is on the Throne Not on Stage

The God we serve is an august, spiritual being both deserving and desirous of our deepest respect. Though described in Scripture as a friend to man (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23), He is not some sort of "good buddy" to joke with or about.

Our God is still on the throne (Psalm 45:6); His ways remain higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:9), and His authoritative Word still promises to judge us in the Last Day (Revelation 20: 12).

No measure of self-appointed, flippant familiarity with the God of heaven detracts one bit or whit from His inherent majesty. Our God is eminently worthy of our reverence; thus we must serve Him "acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28). Truly, reverence is the 'very first element of religion.'

Moreover, our periods of public worship should express this spirit of reverence. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all about him" (Psalm 89:7). Worship performed "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) suggests a demeanor of awe and reverence.

We agree that our worship services should be permeated with expressions of joy and thanksgiving - they should not come to resemble a congregational visit to the dentist, but neither should the reverent worship of our heavenly Father be confused for a carnival or rock concert. Regardless of where, when, or by whom the worship is performed - it must be characterized by reverence and decorum. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Corinthians 14:40).

The worship assembly is not the proper setting for screaming, whistling, clapping, and stomping the feet in response to a speaker's message. We do not gather to pay homage to men but to worship God. We do not come together as we would at football game or a band concert; we come to worship God. We do not assemble with the intent of being entertained; we come to worship God. Any assembly of saints with the intent of worshipping and praising the God of heaven should reject that which emphasizes the carnal emotions and minimizes the spiritual man. An outsider should be able to attend one of our assemblies and see a marked difference between the worship of God and a stage show performance.

In the realm of worship, zeal without knowledge (Romans 10:2) paves a dangerous road toward pagan, fleshly-oriented, and riotous assemblies. Most of our denominational neighbors have long gone this route, with services geared more toward entertaining man than worshipping God. May we learn to temper our joy in Christ with a Christ-like reverence for things holy. And may we teach our children so.

Remember, our God is on the throne - not on stage.

- by Dalton Key

Keeping Our Word & Paying Our Debts

The Bible is very strong on (1) keeping our promises and (2) paying our debts (Ecclesiastes 5:2, 4-5; Numbers 30:2; Romans 13:8; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9). We are not to go back on our word or fail to repay that which we have borrowed.

We should strive to keep our word. A track record of broken promises or unkept commitments is a very bad track record.

There is nothing sinful or shameful in borrowing money. It may be embarrassing to have to do so, but we can recover from that. If our folly or carelessness put us into a situation in which we had to borrow, we should work on that and endeavor not to repeat the mistake. But the mere step of borrowing money is not in itself either sinful or shameful. What is both sinful and shameful is a deliberate or careless failure to pay back what we have borrowed, and the world is full of people who have done and continue to do that. Many of them profess to be Christians. To use the words of James: "*My brethren, these things ought not so to be*" (James 3:10).

- by Bill Crews

At Your Weakest Moment . . .

. . . that's when Satan will tempt you to sin. Our adversary is no fool. He's not going to waste time and effort by working against your strengths. He will attack you when you are the weakest

and where you are most vulnerable.

Here's an example: Someone has had harsh words to say about you. They have assumed the worst, impugned your motives, jumped to false conclusions, spread rumor and innuendo about you. How will you react? You are angry, hurt, insulted, disgusted. The strong temptation is to strike back, to get even, to put this person 'in his place'. But, you must not submit to the temptation. God's word says, *"Never pay back evil for evil to anyone... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Rom. 12:17,21). It's hard to follow this instruction at the moment, because you are weak and vulnerable. But this course of action is best - the Lord says so, and our own experience bears this out.

During such times of weakness and vulnerability, we should pray as David did, *"Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness with men who do iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies"* (Ps. 141:3,4).

We've been warned that Satan has many *"devices"* (2 Cor. 2:11). Chief among these is his ability to detect our weaknesses and attack us there. Please realize that you must work hardest during your weakest moments, because that is when Satan is at work against you.

- by Greg Gwin