

## Lecture XI.

# The Knowledge That God Is, Combined With The Knowledge That He Is To Be Worshipped.

John iv. 24.—“God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

There are two common notions engraven on the hearts of all men by nature,—that God is, and that he must be worshipped, and these two live and die together, they are clear, or blotted together. According as the apprehension of God is clear, and distinct, and more deeply engraven on the soul, so is this notion of man's duty of worshipping God clear and imprinted on the soul, and whenever the actions of men do prove that the conception of the worship of God is obliterate or worn out,—whenever their transgressions do witness that a man hath not a lively notion of this duty of God's worship,—that doth also prove that the very notion of a godhead is worn out, and cancelled in the soul, for how could souls conceive of God as he is indeed, but they must needs, with Moses, (Exod. xxxiv. 8) make haste to pray and worship? It is the principle of the very law of nature which shall make the whole world inexcusable, “because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.” A father must have honour, and a master must have fear, and God, who is the common parent and absolute master of all, must have worship, in which reverence and fear, mixed with rejoicing and affection, predominate. It is supposed, and put beyond all question that he must be; “he that worships him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” It is not simply said, God is a Spirit and must be

worshipped, no, for none can doubt of it. If God be, then certainly worship is due to him, for who is so worshipful? And because it is so beyond all question, therefore woe to the irreligious world that never puts it in practice! O, what excuse can you have, who have not so much as a form of godliness! Do you not know, that it is beyond all controversy that God must be worshipped? Why then do you deny that in your practice, which all men must confess in their conscience? Is not he God, the Lord, a living and self being Spirit? Then must he not have worshippers? Beasts are not created for it, it is you, O sons of men! whom he made for his own praise, and it is not more suitable to your nature than it is honourable and glorious. This is the great dignity and excellency you are privileged with, beyond the brute beasts,—to have spirits within you capable of knowing and acknowledging the God of your spirits. Why then do you both rob and spoil God of his glory, and cast away your own excellency? Why do you love to trample on your ornaments and wallow in the puddle; like beasts void of religion, but so much worse than beasts, that you ought to be better, and were created for a more noble design? O base spirited wretches, who hang down your souls to this earth, [058] and follow the dictates of your own sense and lust, and have not so much as an external form of worshipping God! How far are you come short of the noble design of your creation, and the high end of your immortal souls! If you will not worship God, know, he will have worshippers. Certainly he will not want it; because he hath designed so many souls to stand before him, and worship him, and that number will not fail. He might indeed have wanted worshippers: for what advantage is it to him? But in this he declares his love and respect to man, that he will not want honour and service from him. It is rather to put honour upon him, and to make him blessed and happy, than for any gain that can amount to himself by it. For this is indeed the true honour and happiness of man, not to be worshipped and served of other fellow-creatures, but to worship and serve the Creator.

This is the highest advancement of a soul, to lie low before him, and to obey him, and have our service accepted of his Majesty. I beseech you, strive about this noble service! Since he must have worshippers, O say within your souls, "I must be one! If he had but one, I could not be content if I were not that one." Since the Father is seeking worshippers, (ver. 23,) O let him find thee! Offer thyself to him, saying, Lord, here am I. Should he seek you, who can have no advantage from you? Should he go about so earnest a search for true worshippers, who can have no profit by them? And why do ye not seek him, since to you all the gain and profit redounds? Shall he seek you to make you happy? And why do ye not seek him and happiness in him? It is your own service, I may truly say, and not his so much; for in serving him thou dost rather serve thyself; for all the benefit redounds to thyself, though thou must not intend such an end, to serve him for thyself, but for his name's sake; else thou shalt neither honour him, nor advantage thyself. I pray you let him not seek in vain, for in these afflictions he is seeking worshippers; and if he find you, you are found and saved indeed. Do not then forsake your own mercy, to run from him who follows you with salvation.

As none can be ignorant that God is, and must be worshipped, so it is unknown to the world in what manner he must be worshipped. The most part of men have some form in worshipping God, and please themselves in it so well that they think God is well pleased with it; but few there are who know indeed what it is to worship him in a manner acceptable to his Majesty. Now you know it is all one not to worship him at all, as not to worship him in that way he likes to be worshipped. Therefore, the most part of men are but self-worshippers, because they please none but themselves in it. It is not the worship his soul hath chosen, but their own invention; for you must take this as an undeniable ground, that God must be worshipped according to his own will and pleasure, and not according to your humour or intention. Therefore, his soul abhors will-worship, devised by men out

of ignorant zeal or superstition, though there might seem much devotion in it, and much affection to God. As in the Israelites sacrificing their children, what more seeming self-denial,—and yet what more real self-idolatry? God owns not such a service, for it is not service and obedience to his will and pleasure, but to men's own will and humour. Therefore, a man must not look for a reward but from himself. Now, it is not only will-worship, when the matter and substance of the worship is not commanded of God, but also when a commanded worship is not discharged in the appointed manner. Therefore, O how few true worshippers will the Father find! True worship must have truth for the substance, and spirit for the manner of it; else it is not such a worship as the Father seeks and will be pleased with. Divine worship must have truth in it,—that is plain,—but what was that truth? It must be conformed to the rule and pattern of worship, which is God's will and pleasure revealed in the word of truth. True worship is the very practice of the word of truth. It carries the image and superscription and command upon it, which is a necessary ingredient in it, and constituent of it. Therefore, if thy service have the image of thy own will stamped on it, it is not divine worship but will-worship. Thus all human ceremonies and ordinances enjoined for the service of God, carry the inscription not of God, but of man, who is the author and original of them, and so are but adulterated and false coin that will not pass current with God. I fear there be many rites and vain customs among ignorant people, in which they place some religion, which have no ground in the word of God, but are only “old wives' fables” and traditions. How many things of that nature are used upon a religious account, in which God hath placed no religion! Many have a superstitious conceit of the public place of worship, as if there were more holiness in it than in any other house; and so they think their prayers in the church are more acceptable than in their chamber. But Christ refutes that superstitious opinion of places, and so consequently of days, meats, and all such external

things. The Jews had a great opinion of their temple, the Samaritans of their mountain,—as if these places had sanctified their services. But saith our Lord, (ver. 21,) “The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father,” but it is any where acceptable, if so be ye worship in spirit and truth. Many of you account it religion to pray and mutter words of your own in the time of public prayer; but who hath required this at your hands? If ye would pray yourselves, go apart; shut the door behind thee, saith Christ. Private prayer should be in private and secret; but where public prayer is, your hearts should close with the petitions, and offer them up jointly to God. It is certainly a great sleight of that deceitful destroyer, the devil, to possess your minds with an opinion of religion in such vain babblings, that he may withdraw both your ears and your hearts from the public worship of God; for when every one is busied with his own prayers, you cannot at all join in the public service of God which is offered up in your name. The like I may say of stupid forms of prayer, and tying yourselves to a platform, written in a book, or to some certain words gotten by the heart? Who hath commanded this? Sure, not the Lord, who hath promised his Spirit to teach them to pray, and help their infirmities, who know not how, nor what to pray. It is a device of your own, invented by Satan to quench the spirit of supplication, which should be the very natural breathing of a Christian. But there are some so grossly ignorant of what prayer is, that they make use of the ten commandments, and creed, as a prayer. So void are they of the knowledge and Spirit of God that they cannot discern betwixt God’s commands to themselves and their own requests to God; betwixt his speaking to men, and their speaking to him; between their professing of him before men, and praying and confessing to him. All this is but forged, imaginary worship,—worship falsely so called, which the Father seeks not, and receives not.

But what if I should say, that the most part of your wor-

ship, even that which is commanded of God, as prayer, hearing, reading, &c., hath no truth in it, I should say nothing amiss. For though you do those things that are commanded, yet not as commanded, without any respect to divine appointment; and only because you have received them as traditions from your fathers, and because you are taught so by the precepts of men, and are accustomed so to do: therefore the stamp of God's will and pleasure is not engraven on them, but of your own will, or of the will of men. Let me pose<sup>138</sup> your consciences, many of you, what difference is there between your praying and your plowing; between your hearing, and your harrowing; between your reading in the Scriptures, and your reaping in the harvest; between your religious service and your common ordinary actions; I say, what difference is there in the rise of these? You do many civil things out of custom, or because of the precepts of men; and is there any other principle at the bottom of your religious performances? Do you at all consider these are divine appointments,—these have a stamp of his authority on them? And from the conscience of such an immediate command of God, and the desire to please him and obey him, do you go about these? I fear many cannot say it. O, I am sure all cannot, though it may be all will say it. Therefore your religious worship can come in no other account than will-worship, or man-worship. It hath not the stamp of truth on it,—an express conformity to the truth of God as his truth.

But we must press this out a little more. Truth is opposed to a ceremony and shadow. The ceremonies of old were shadows, or the external body of religion, in which the soul and spirit of godliness should have been enclosed; but the Lord did always urge more earnestly the substance and truth than the ceremony,—the weightier matters of the law, piety, equity, and sobriety, than these lighter external ceremonies. He sets a higher account upon mercy than sacrifice, and upon obedience than ceremonies. But [060]

---

<sup>138</sup> [That is, propound a nice question.—*Ed.*]

this people turned it just contrary. They summed up all their religion in some ceremonial performance, and separated those things God had so nearly conjoined. They would be devout men in offering sacrifices, in their washings, in their rites, and yet made no conscience of heart and soul piety towards God and upright just dealing with men. Therefore the Lord so often quarrels with them, and rejects all their service as being a device and invention of their own, which never entered into his heart. Isa. v. 10-15, Jer. vii. throughout, Isa. lxvi. 3-4, Isa. xxviii. Now, if you will examine it impartially, it is even just so with us. There are some external things in religion which, in comparison with the weightier things of faith and obedience are but ceremonial. In these you place the most part if not all your religion, and think yourselves good Christians, if you be baptized, and hear the word, and partake of the Lord's table, and such like, though in the meantime you be not given to secret prayer, and reading, and do not inwardly judge and examine yourselves that ye may flee unto a Mediator—though your conversation be unjust and scandalous among men. I say unto such souls as the Lord unto the Jews, "Who hath required this at your hands? Who commanded you to hear the word, to be baptized, to wait on public ordinances? Away with all this, it is abomination to his majesty!" Though it please you never so well, the more it displeases him. If you say, Why commands he us to hear? &c., I say, the Lord never commanded these external ordinances for the sum of true religion; that was not the great thing which was in his heart, that he had most pleasure unto but the weightier matters of the law, piety, equity, and sobriety, a holy and godly conversation adorning the gospel. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" So then, thou dost not worship him in truth, but in a shadow. The truth is holiness and righteousness. That external profession is but a ceremony. While you separate these external ordinances from these weighty duties of piety and justice, they are but a

dead body without a soul. If the Lord required truth of old, much more now, when he hath abolished the multitude of ceremonies, that the great things of his law may be more seen and loved.

If you would then be true worshippers, look to the whole mind of God, and especially the chief pleasure of God's mind, that which he most delights in, and by any means do not separate what God hath conjoined. Do not divide righteousness towards men from a profession of holiness to God, else it is but a falsehood, a counterfeit coin. Do not please yourselves so much in external church privileges, without a holy and godly conversation adorning the gospel, but let the chief study, endeavour, and delight of your souls be about that which God most delights in. Let the substantiate of religion have the first place in the soul. Pray more in secret, that will be the life of your souls. You ought, indeed, to attend public ordinances, but, above all, take heed to your conversation and walking at home, and in secret. Prayer in your family is a more substantial worship than to sit and hear prayer in public, and prayer in secret is more substantial than that. The more retired and immediate a duty be, the more weighty it is, the more it crosses thy corruptions and evidences the stamp of God on thy affections, the more divine it is, and therefore to serve God in these is to serve him in truth. Practice hath more of truth in it than a profession. "When your fathers executed judgment, was not this to know me?" Duties that have more opposition from our nature, against them, and less fuel or oil to feed the flame of our self love and corruption, have more truth in them, and if you should worship God in all other duties, and not especially in these, you do not worship him in truth.

Next, let us consider the manner of divine worship, and this is as needful to true worship as true matter, that it be commanded, and done as it is commanded,—that completes true worship. Now, I know no better way or manner to worship God in, than so to worship him, as our worship may carry the stamp of his image upon it as it may be a glass wherein we may behold God's

[061]

nature and properties. For such as himself is, such he would be acknowledged to be. I would think it were true worship indeed, which had engraven on it the name of the true and living God, if it did speak out so much of itself. “That God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him diligently.” Most part of our service speaks an unknown God, and carries such an inscription upon it, “To the unknown God.” There is so little either reverence, or love, or fear, or knowledge in it, as if we did not worship the true God, but an idol. It is said, that “the fool says in his heart, there is no God, because his thoughts and affections and actions are so little composed to the fear and likeness of that God, as if he did indeed plainly deny him.” I fear it may be said thus of our worship. It says, There is no God. It is of such a nature that none could conclude from it that it had any relation to the true God. Our prayers deny God, because there is nothing of God appears in them. But this is true worship when it renders back to God his own image and name. *Unde repercussus redditur ipse sibi.* As it is a pure fountain, in which a man may see his shadow distinctly, but a troubled fountain or mire in which he cannot behold himself, so it is pure worship, which receives and reflects the pure image of God, but impure and unclean worship which cannot receive it and return it. I pray you, Christians, consider this for it is such worshippers the Father seeks. And why seeks he such, but because in them he finds himself? So to speak, his own image and superscription is upon them, his mercy is engraven on their faith and confidence, his majesty and power is stamped on their humility and reverence, his goodness is to be read in the soul's rejoicing, his greatness and justice in the soul's trembling. Thus there ought to be some engravings on the soul answering the characters of his glorious name. O how little of this is among them that desire to know something of God! How little true worship, even among them whom the Father hath sought out to make true worshippers! But alas, how are all of us unacquainted with this kind of worship! We stay

upon the first principles and practices of religion, and go not on to build upon the foundation. Sometimes your worship hath a stamp of God's holiness and justice in fear and terror at such a majesty which makes you tremble before him, but where is the stamp of his mercy and grace which should be written in your faith and rejoicing? Tremble and fear indeed, but "rejoice with trembling, because there is mercy with him." Sometimes there is rejoicing and quietness in the soul, but that quickly degenerates into carnal confidence, and makes the soul turn grace into wantonness and esteem of itself above what is right, because it is not counterpoised with the sense and apprehension of his holiness and justice. But O to have these jointly written upon the heart in worship, fear, reverence, confidence, humility and faith! That is a rare thing; it is a divine composition and temper of spirit that makes a divine soul. For the most part, our worship savours and smells nothing of God, neither his power, nor his mercy and grace, nor his holiness and justice, nor his majesty and glory; a secure, faint, formal way, void of reverence, of humility, of fervency, and of faith. I beseech you let us consider, as before the Lord, how much pains and time we lose, and please none but ourselves, and profit none at all. Stir up yourselves as in his sight for it is the keeping of our souls continually as in his sight which will stamp our service with his likeness. The fixed and constant meditation on God and his glorious properties, this will beget the resemblance between our worship and the God whom we worship and it will imprint his image upon it, and then it should please him, and then it should profit thee, and then it should edify others.

But more particularly, the worship must have the stamp of God's spiritual nature, and be conformed to it in some measure, else it cannot please him. There must be a conformity between God and souls. This is the great end of the gospel, to repair that image of God which was once upon man, and make him like God again. Now, it is this way that Jesus Christ repairs

this image, and brings about the conformity with God, by the soul's worshipping of God suitable to his nature, which, as it grows more and more suitable to God's nature, it is the more and more like God, and happy in that likeness. Now, "God is a Spirit, therefore," saith Christ, you "must worship him in spirit and in truth." The worship then of saints must be of a spiritual nature, that it may be like the immortal divine Spirit. It is such worshippers the Father seeks. He seeks souls to make them like himself and this likeness and conformity to God is the very foundation of the soul's happiness, and eternal refreshment. This is a point of great consequence, and I fear not laid to heart. The worship must be like the worshipped. It is a spirit must worship the eternal Spirit. It is not a body that can be the principal and chief agent in the business. What communion can God have with your bodies, while your souls are removed far from him, more than with beasts? All society and fellowship must be between those that are like one another. A man can have no comfortable company with beasts, or with stones, or with trees. It is men that can converse with men, and a spirit must worship the self being Spirit. Do not mistake this as if under the cays of the gospel we were not called to an external and bodily worship—to any service to which our outward man is instrumental. That is one of the deep delusions of this age, into which some men, "reprobate concerning the faith," have fallen, that there should be no external ordinances, but that Christians are now called to a worship all spirit, pure spirit, &c. This is one of the spirits, and spiritual doctrines (that call themselves so) which ye must not receive, for it is neither the Spirit of God nor of Christ that teacheth this. Not the Spirit of God the Creator, because he hath made the whole man, body and soul, and so must be worshipped of the whole man. He hath created man in such a capacity as he may offer up external actions in a reasonable manner, with the inward affections. As the Lord hath created him, so should he serve him—every member every part in its own capacity,—the

soul to precede, and the body to follow,—the soul to be the chief worshipper, and the body its servant employed in the worship. True worship hath a body and a soul as well as a true man, and as the soul separated is not a complete man, so neither is the soul separated a complete worshipper without the body. The external ordinances of God is the body, the inward soul affection is the spirit, which being joined together make complete worship. Neither is it the Spirit of Christ which teacheth this, because our Lord Jesus hath taught us to offer up our bodies and spirits both as a reasonable service, Rom. xii. 1, 2. The sacrifice of the bodily performance offered up by the spiritual affection and renewed mind is a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable and reasonable. That Spirit which dwelt in Christ above measure, did not think it too base to vent itself in the way of external ordinances. He was, indeed, above all, above the law, yet did willingly come under them to teach us, who have so much need and want, to come under them. He prayed much, he preached, he did sing and read, to teach us how to worship, and how much need we have of prayer and preaching. This was not the spirit Christ promised to his disciples and apostles, which spirit did breathe most lively in the use of external ordinances all their days, and this is not the spirit which was at that hour in which Christ spoke “the hour is come and now is,” ver. 23, in which the true worship of God shall not be in the external Jewish ceremonies and rites, void of all life and inward sense of piety, but the true worship of God shall be made up of a soul and body,—of spirit and truth—of the external appointed ordinances according to the word of truth, and the spirit of truth,—and of the spirit and inward soul-affection and sincerity which shall quicken and actuate that external performance. There were no such worshippers then as had no use of ordinances. Christ was not such, his disciples were not such, therefore it is a new gospel, which, if an angel should bring from heaven, ye ought not to receive it.

As it is certain, then, that both soul and body must be em-

ployed in this business, so it is sure that the soul and spirit must be the first mover and chiefest agent in it, because it is a spiritual business, and hath relation to the Fountain spirit, which hath the most perfect opposition to all false appearances and external shows. That part of man that cometh nearest God, must draw nearest in worshipping God, and if that be removed far away, there is no real communion with God. Man judges according to the outward appearance, and can reach no farther than the outward man, but God is an all searching Spirit, who trieth the heart and reins, and therefore he will pass another judgment upon your worship than men can do, because he observes all the secret wanderings and escapes of the heart out of his sight. He misses the soul when you present attentive ears or eloquent tongues. There is no dallying with His Majesty, painting will not deceive him, his very nature is contrary to hypocrisy and dissimulation; and what is it but dissimulation, when you present yourselves to religious exercises as his people, but within are nothing like it, nothing awaking nothing present? O consider, my beloved, what a one you have to do with! It is not men, but the Father of spirits, who will not be pleased with what pleases men, of your own flesh, but must have a spirit to serve him. Alas! what are we doing with such empty names and shows of religion? Busied with the outside of worship only, as if we had none to do with but men who have eyes of flesh. All that we do in this kind is lost labour, and will never be reckoned up in the account of true worship. I am sure you know and may reflect upon yourselves, that you make religion but a matter of outward fashion and external custom; you have never almost taken it to heart in earnest. You may frequent the ordinances,—you may have a form of godliness consisting in some outward performances and privileges,—and O, how void and destitute of all spirit, and life, and power! Not to speak of the removal of affection and the employing of the marrow of your soul upon base lusts and creatures, or the scattering of your desires abroad amongst them,

for that is too palpable, even your very thoughts and minds are removed from this business, you have nothing present but an ear, or eye, and your minds are about other business, your desires, your fears, your joys, and delights, your affections, never did run in the channel of religious exercises, all your passion is vented in other things. But here you are blockish and stupid, without any sensible apprehension of God, his mercy, or justice, or wrath, or of your own misery and want. You sorrow in other things, but none here, none for sin! You joy for other things, but none here, you cannot rejoice at the gospel! Prayer is a burden, not a delight. If your spirits were chiefly employed in religious duties, religion would be almost your element, your pleasure and recreation; but now it is wearisome to the flesh, because the spirit taketh not the chief weight upon it. O! “be not deceived, God is not mocked.” You do but mock yourselves with external shows, while you are satisfied with them. I beseech you, look inwardly, and be not satisfied with the outward appearance, but ask at thy soul, where it is, and how it is. Retire within, and bring up thy spirit to this work. I am sure you may observe that any thing goes more smoothly and sweetly with you than the worship of God, because your mind is more upon any thing else. I fear the most part of us who endeavour, in some measure, to seek God, have too much dross of outward formality, and much scum of filthy hypocrisy and guile. O! pray that the present furnace may purge away this scum. It is the great ground of God's present controversy with Scotland, but, alas! the bellows are like to burn, and we not to be purged. Our scum goes not out from us. We satisfy ourselves with some outward exercises of religion. Custom undoes us all, and it was never more undoing than when indignation and wrath are pursuing it. O! that you would ponder what you lose by it,—both the sweetness and advantage of godliness, beside the dishonour of God. You take a formal, negligent, and secure way as the most easy way, and the most pleasing to your flesh, and I am persuaded you find it the most difficult way, because you

want all the pleasant and sweet refreshment and soul delights you might have in God, by a serious and diligent minding of religion. The pleasure and sweetness of God tasted and found, will make diligence and pains more easy than slothfulness can be to the slothful. This oils the wheels, and makes them run swiftly, formality makes them drive heavily. Thus you live always in a complaining humour,—sighing, and going backward,—because you have some stirring principle of conscience within which bears witness against you, and your formal sluggish disposition on the other hand refuses to awake and work. You are perplexed and tormented between these two. When thy spirit and affections go one way, and thy body another, when thy conscience drives on the spirit, and thy affections draw back, it must needs be an unpleasant business.