

# THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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## **Two Men Attend Worship Services**

**By Bill Hall**

Two men attend worship services. The first man attends wholly out of a sense of duty. He understands the teaching of **Hebrews 10:25**: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," and is determined to obey faithfully that teaching. He will not allow anything within his power to stand in the way of his attending the worship periods of the church.

The second man recognizes his duty in this matter, too, but his primary motivation in attendance is his love for the Lord and his joy in blending his voice and heart with other Christians in praise and adoration to the Lord. He delights in worship and the spiritual strength he derives through worship.

The first man is mentally passive throughout the worship service. If the words of the song happen to catch his attention, he observes and appreciates them; otherwise, he just sings along with little concern for what he is singing. If the sermon is interesting, he

listens; otherwise, he just relaxes, and hopes the time won't drag too badly. He does meditate briefly concerning Christ's suffering and death as he partakes of the supper, for somehow the importance of the memorial feast has been impressed upon his mind.

The second man comes mentally prepared to worship. He pays close attention to the words of each song and makes the sentiment of the songs his own sentiment. In fact, he sometimes studies the words of frequently used songs so he will be sure he understands their meaning. Depth of meaning is of greater importance to him than a catchy tune or rhythmic beat. He listens to each phrase of the prayer that is led, and if he can approve the petitions of the prayer, he unites with the one who leads with his "Amen." He discerns the Lord's body as he breaks bread, and he listens carefully to the sermon, volunteering his attention, hiding the word in his heart, that he might not sin against God (**Psalm 119:11**). If his mind wanders occasionally, he brings it back to the worship. He worships with a consciousness of God as the object

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of his worship, the One toward whom these expressions of adoration are directed.

The first man reduces his service to a mere code of external rites, while the second man obeys "from the heart," combining the outward with the inward. The first man is more likely to be satisfied with his service to the Lord, for he has accepted the easier standard, but it is the second man who enjoys God's approval. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (**John 4:24**).

We ask the reader: "In which of these two men do you see a reflection of yourself?" The need is obvious! We must cast off our laziness and indifference, revitalize our spirits, and bring ourselves to worship God acceptably. There is a considerable difference between mere attendance of a worship service and truly acceptable worship.

## **Two Men Try to Worship**

**By Bill Hall**

Worship under the best of conditions can sometimes be difficult. Distractions, human error, and sometimes funny situations can occur to take one's attention away from the Lord. Attitudes, however, can prove to be a major factor in acceptable (or non-acceptable) worship. For instance ...

Two men sincerely try to worship. The first man, though, is

frustrated throughout. His frustrations begin with the opening announcements when the man in charge takes ten minutes to say what any normal man could say in three. He is hardly over that when the song leader adds to his frustrations, selecting a song he is sure contains an unscriptural phrase. The man who presides at the table doesn't help when he uses the term "loaf" instead of "bread," and then the man who is called on to "give thanks for the bread" gives thanks for everything but the bread. The preacher makes a major contribution by totally misapplying a passage of scripture ("He probably didn't spend enough time on that one," the man thinks). When the worship period is finally dismissed, he tries to share his frustrations with those around him, but no one seems to care.

The second man observes many of the mistakes the first man observes. In fact, without fanfare he just doesn't sing the questionable phrase in the song and he silently thanks God for the bread when he realizes the leader's failure to do so. But while observing mistakes, he focuses attention on the good sentiments of the songs that are used, and on the death of his Savior during the Lord's Supper. He makes the prayer that is led his own and appreciates the good thoughts presented in the lesson. He has come to worship God. He makes allowances for human frailty on the

part of the leaders in worship, appreciates their sincere efforts, and refuses to let their mistakes keep him from his purpose.

The first man is to be pitied. His ability to "worship" is dependent on the ability of the leaders in the worship period, and any half-observant person knows how inept that leadership can be at times. He comes to worship, but spends the hour criticizing. He blames others for that which is really his own problem. Consequently, his problem with worship becomes a problem also with his brethren; but one cannot have a problem with his worship and his brethren without having a problem in his relationship with God.

The second man, by maintaining a positive attitude toward his brethren, even when they make mistakes, is able to worship acceptably and is drawn closer to God by his worship.

We are not condoning sloppily conducted worship periods. Leaders in worship should seek to avoid mistakes and to do their work effectively. But acceptable worship depends far more on the heart and attitude of the worshiper than on the abilities of leaders. Our first man may point the finger of blame at others, but his real need is a total change of attitude within himself.

### **Two Men Seek Faith**

**By Bill Hall**

Two men seek faith. The **first man's** approach is to try to find solutions to all the problems. He has delved deeply into the difficult questions relating to the Genesis account of creation. He has read volumes on the flood. He finds the story of Jonah particularly challenging. He relies heavily on archaeology and secular history for confirmation of his solutions. He believes **because** he is satisfied with his own answers to the problems of faith.

The **second man's** approach centers upon Jesus Christ. He too has had to consider evidences and struggle with certain problems, but he is fully persuaded that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and has confessed that he believes that fact with all his heart. Believing in Jesus as the infallible Son of God, he does not question anything Jesus believed, anything Jesus said, or anything Jesus authorized to be said.

He, too, wondered about the Genesis account of creation, but his questions ceased when he read the words of Jesus: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?' (**Matthew 19:4-5**). If Jesus' stamp of approval was on the creation story, that was good enough for him. He didn't have the

solution to all the problems, but he believed **because** Jesus believed it, and he believed in Jesus.

His faith in other Old Testament accounts was similarly established. He found Jesus' stamp of approval on the flood (**Matthew 24:37-39**) and the story of Jonah (**Matthew 12:40**), and in fact, on all the Old Testament record in one sweeping statement recorded in **Luke 24:44**: "Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.'"

Since the New Testament contains what Jesus said combined with what He authorized to be said, the second man had no trouble believing the New Testament. His faith in the whole Bible simply rests upon his faith in Christ as the infallible Son of God. He too finds the study of the problems of faith intriguing and challenging, but his own personal faith is not dependent on finding solutions to all the problems.

**The first man's** faith stands on shaky ground, for it is founded on human wisdom. Should some later archaeological discovery or other bit of evidence not now known prove his solutions to be false, the very foundation of his faith would be gone. He would have to seek new solutions or lose his faith entirely.

**The second man's** faith may not appeal to the highly

sophisticated, but it is founded on the rock-on the One who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (**Hebrews 13:8**). "So then faith comes by bearing, and bearing by the word of God" (**Romans 10: 17**)