

The Regulative Principle of Worship

Lord's Day Sermons

By Rev. Andrew Lanning

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: 2 Samuel 6:1-11; Colossians 2:18-23
Preached on: Sunday, March 12, 2023

First Reformed Protestant Church

1675 Baldwin St.
Jenison, MI 49428

Website: www.firstrpc.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/72773

Let us worship our covenant God together in congregational prayer.

Our Father, which art in heaven from thee we have received the victory, victory over our death which is the just reward of sin. Through thee we have received the victory over sin as the root and cause of death. Through thee we have received a victory over all our foes. Through thee we have received the victory of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and have received from thee all of the spoils and benefits and riches of that victory so that thou hast given to us an inheritance which fadeth not away reserved in heaven for us, thou hast given us comfort in our earthly sojourn as we wander here below as pilgrims and strangers, and thou hast given us the peace and the certainty of our Lord Jesus Christ and his righteousness. And because thou hast given us the victory, because we have received it from thee, we give thee all honor and glory and blessing for the victory has not been ours but has been Jesus Christ's and has been thine as the Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank thee, Father, for bringing us into thy house again, which also belongs to that victory that thou dost call us to assemble and by thy Spirit and word doth draw us together and give unto us the joy of thy house. We thank thee that thy house is a house of prayer and that here in thy house we may behold thy beauty, and inquire in thy temple. We pray, Father, that thou wilt show thyself in thy mercy and grace as our God and our Father, that thou wilt speak to our weary souls by the gospel of Jesus Christ and comfort us and give to us who are weary and heavy-laden rest. We pray, Father, that thou wilt teach us to learn of Christ, who is meek and lowly in heart and in his meekness, and in thy gentleness which hath made us great, may we find rest and peace.

And we pray that thou wilt remember our congregation, and thou wilt give unto us the peace of the gospel with thee and with one another. We thank thee for the Holy Spirit whom thou hast poured out, and who abides with us. We pray, Father, that thou will give us unity in that spirit, in that spirit of truth and grant us grace also as brethren together to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We thank thee, father, that we may be members of one body together in our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that thou wilt grant unto us as a congregation the friendliness and fellowship of the covenant of grace so that as thou dost knit us ever closer to thee by thy word and by thy Spirit,

thou wilt knit us also closer one to another. We pray that we may bear one another's burdens, weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice, and all of this to thy glory, that the glory and unity and blessedness of our head may be seen.

We pray thy blessing upon our churches. We thank thee for the Federation of which thou hast made us a part. We confess in this, too, thy grace and goodness to us for we have not deserved to be united with any other, especially in this late hour in the world as our Lord's coming draws closer and closer. And yet, in thy goodness, thou hast established other congregations with whom we are one. We pray that thou will remember our denomination and bless us with thy Spirit and thy word. Wilt thou remember us in our need for ministers of the gospel. Give unto us students, and we thank thee for the students that thou hast provided. We pray that their studies and their instruction may be used by thee to prepare them in due time to receive a call from the churches. Wilt thou give us more students also, according to thy will. Lay upon the hearts of the men to consider whether their calling is to proclaim, "Thus saith the Lord."

Remember also Mr. Boomers as he considers the calls that have been extended to him. Give him understanding of thy will and joy in that will. Remember the churches who are vacant and who have called Mr. Boomers. Wilt thou provide patience and peace for them also. May thy will be done in the matter of the making and the answering of calls.

And we pray that thou wilt bless also our schools, the school that thou hast given to us in this place and the schools that thou hast given throughout the continent. We consider these schools and wonder at them for thou hast given what no man could have provided, thou hast given even when we were not clear in our own mind regarding the matter of the schools, and thou hast preserved our schools even through the midst of controversy. We thank thee, Father, for thy grace and thy mercy.

We pray that thou wilt remember the school boards as they decide regarding the matters that pertain to the schools. Remember our teachers standing on their right hand and left day by day as they instruct the children to know thee in all thy works, and to prepare them to serve thee in all their callings. Wilt thou grant unto our teachers the strength and grace they need as they stand in the place of us as parents. Wilt thou remember all the staff and the volunteers and the many who labor behind the scenes for the sake of the schools. Wilt thou grant unto the association that covenant conviction of laboring together and the rearing of our covenant seed. We thank thee, Father, that we may stand shoulder to shoulder in this work for we confess the work is thine, the work must proceed from thee, the work must be blessed by thee or it is all vain. We pray, Father, that thou wilt see to the rearing of our covenant seed and remember our children and our young people who are beset on every side by the assaults of the wicked world. We pray that thou wilt establish them in the faith, that thou will give unto them a conviction, the conviction of faith and the certainty of faith with regard to thy word. And we pray that thou will give us more teachers for our schools. Thou knowest our need. We see that need ourselves. Wilt thou raise up men and women who may consider whether it is thy calling for them to instruct the covenant seed.

I pray that thou wilt bless our worship this evening. We thank thee for bringing us into thy house. Wilt thou remember thy servant that he may speak thy word and that we may hear the voice of Jesus Christ. Keep his lips and set a watch upon his mouth that he may speak only thy word and that we hearing by faith, may hear our Savior and all his glory and all his finished work and all his blessedness, and that our hearts, which are oftentimes heavy, may be cheered and blessed by that proclamation of his gospel. Wilt thou forgive the sins we have committed and wash away our iniquities in the blood of Jesus Christ. Assure us by the gospel of our forgiveness. Wilt thou give to us the cross of our Lord and all his perfect work and wilt thou keep us from sin, giving unto us all the good works that thou hast before ordained that we should walk in, that thou wilt give to us a thankful life of gratitude unto thee in serving thee, worshipping thee, honoring thee, and this for the glory of thy name, and in gratitude for thy riches. Hear our prayer, Father. Remember our frame that we are dust. Wilt thou cause us to have the confidence that thou all flesh is as grass, thy word endureth forever. Wilt thou hear our prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We worship the Lord now in the giving of our offerings. The first offering is for the building fund and the second is for Grace Reformed Protestant school.

Psalter, #109. #109 and we'll sing the four stanzas. All four of 109.

"The offering on the altar burned
Gives no delight to Thee;
The hearing ear, the willing heart,
Thou givest unto me.

Then, O my God, I come, I come,
Thy purpose to fulfill;
Thy law is written in my heart,
'Tis joy to do Thy will.

Before Thy people I will now
Thy righteousness proclaim;
Thou knowest, Lord, I will not cease
To praise Thy holy Name.

I never have within my heart
Thy faithfulness concealed,
But Thy salvation and Thy truth
To men I have revealed."

We return tonight in God's word to two passages in connection with Question and Answer 96 of Lord's Day 35. First of all, 2 Samuel 6. 2 Samuel 6:1 through 11. 2 Samuel 6,

1 Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims. 3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. 4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. 5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. 6 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. 8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day. 9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? 10 So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite. 11 And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household.

Then second, we turn to Colossians 2:18 through 23. Colossians 2:18 through 23.

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. 20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

This is the word of God holy and inspired. May he bless it to our hearts this evening.

On the basis of those passages and many others, we have the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism regarding the regulative principle of worship in Question and Answer 96. The second commandment is, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." Question 96,

Q. 96. What doth God require in the second commandment?

A. That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.

Beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ, the matter of what has been called the regulative principle of worship is a very dear and precious matter to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The matter of the regulative principle is not a fearful or distasteful subject for the church, and that's because the matter of the regulative principle has to do with that central activity of the church's life which is the worship of Jehovah, and for the church of Jesus Christ there is nothing better, nothing at all in all the world better than the worship of Jehovah. The church longs for that worship and, in fact, sings of her longing for that worship when she says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." And if someone would try to keep the church of Jesus Christ from worshipping, if they would try to hold her back, then the church of Jesus Christ would storm the gates of the church and storm the kingdom of heaven. The church loves worship. She simply loves worship. There's nothing better for the church of Jesus Christ than the worship of her God. God is here with you and he delights to be here with you. It's his good pleasure to be here with his church. He draws you into his house and by the cords of his covenant love he brings you close to himself and speaks to you by his word.

There's nothing better for the church than the worship of Jehovah God, and therefore the matters pertaining to that worship, including the regulative principle of worship, are also precious to the church of Jesus Christ. Now in our own congregation at present, that may not seem to be so much the case that the regulative principle is a very precious thing. There might even be some tension in our own congregation about the matter, and especially questions about the application of that principle to our singing. It is striking to me that there was a difference of opinion in our Mother Church that maybe ran deeper than we thought, probably ran deeper than I thought, but a difference of opinion that was pretty firmly entrenched in our Mother Church with regard to the regulative principle and singing. One position that was taught publicly is that the regulative principle of worship requires exclusive psalmody in the church so that what the church is to sing is the 150 Psalms of David and therefore the church is forbidden in her worship from singing hymns, that is, non-inspired man-made songs intended for worship that were not part of the 150 Psalms. Many of us grew up being taught that the regulative principle applied to the Psalms. There was another position in our Mother Church that taught that the regulative principle did not apply to exclusive psalmody, that the regulative principle simply meant the congregation must sing and that she must sing the word, and the only reason why we practiced virtually but not entirely exclusive psalmody in the churches, is because we desired to for practical reasons but not for the regulative principles reason. And those two positions that many of us were brought up in, one or the other, have carried into the Reformed Protestant churches.

So there is a question of the application of the regulative principle to the singing of the church, especially this question does the regulative principle require exclusive psalmody.

We will look at that question tonight but that does not mean that this topic for the church of Jesus Christ is something fearful, not something to be afraid of whatsoever. This is the matter of your worship. It is the matter of God dwelling with you and bringing you into his covenant fellowship through the Lord Jesus Christ. It's striking to me, and I wonder sometimes how it could be that there were two exclusionary, contradictory principles that were taught in Mother, and that could just go for decades and decades and lifetimes. I suppose one explanation is that now that the Lord has given reformation in the Reformed Protestant churches, doctrine means something and the worship of the church means something. It's not mere show. It's not mere dressing. It's not merely activities that you go through. Worship means something to the church of Jesus Christ in reformation and doctrine means something and this matter of the regulative principle means much for the Reformed Protestant churches.

And so tonight we are going to consider that regulative principle out of the Lord's Day that we considered last time, Lord's Day 35, which deals with the second commandment, and because the pulpit's task from Jehovah is to teach and to instruct and to lead when there is difference, we return especially tonight to Question 96 and the statement that we may not worship God in any other way than he has commanded in his word. So we consider this joyful, glad topic tonight under the theme, "The Regulative Principle of Worship." In the first place, consider the principle and God; in the second place, consider the principle and Christ; and in the third place, consider the principle and the church.

In order to understand the regulative principle of worship, we first must know something about worship, that is, about the public worship of the church, the worship of the church as she assembles and the place that God gives her to worship his name. The worship of the church is the meeting of Jehovah God with his people. Jehovah God assembles his people, bringing them together, and our Lord comes to his people and meets with them there. This is God's house, not the particular building that we're in, but this assembling of the people of God is God's house. A man lives in his house and so also God in his house as the divine God lives in his house, dwells in his house. When the church is assembled for worship, that is the house of God where he comes to meet with his people. And God has prepared everything for the worship of the church. God has set everything exactly as he would have it for his church to come to him and his church to commune with him. You could think of it this way, that in God's house he has prepared an elaborate dinner for his people. He is going to bring them into that dinner and he is going to sit with them at the table. And God has made everything just as he would have it for that dinner, that fellowship with his people, and he does that because he delights in his people. He delights to fellowship with them. He delights that they come into his house. And I tell you, you're going to spend the rest of eternity trying to understand the depths of that statement, that one sentence.

God delights in dwelling with his people. Who are we that the living God, the Lord of heaven and earth, should dwell with us? Who are we that he should prepare this house, that he would set up all things in it for our fellowship with him? And yet the truth of the gospel is that God delights in it, he loves it, it's his good pleasure to have you with him. And in this dinner that God prepares for his people, this feast really, he has on the table

the bread piping hot out of the oven, he has the invigorating wine set out, the table is piled high with all of the good things that Jehovah God provides his people, on the chair of every member of his household he has laid a garment, a garment of pure white which is the garment of the righteousness of Christ, he has laid on top of that a garment of praise that will replace the garment of the spirit of heaviness that his people have. He has made all things ready for the fellowship of himself with his people and he loves it when he brings his people into that house and sits them at table and breaks bread to them and feeds them with the Lord Jesus Christ, pours out the wine of the blood of Christ to nourish them unto everlasting life and ladens them with all these good things, and puts on them the garment of the righteousness of Christ and the garment of praise. The Lord delights in the worship and fellowship of his people.

No, as Jehovah God fellowships with his people and brings them into worship with him, God himself must prepare all things for that dinner or that meeting that delights him. You think of who you are and who I am in this illustration, you and I are outside by nature. You and I are naked out there. We don't have any garment of righteousness or clothed with the clotted greasy rags of our own works. You and I don't have any food to nourish anyone to bring in. You and I don't have all those riches and those treasures and those good things. We're poor. We're blind. We're naked. We are publicans and sinners. There's nothing that the people of God themselves can provide for that worship and for that fellowship with Jehovah God. He must set it all up. He sets the table. He makes the food. He puts all the settings. He puts the eye salve out. Jehovah God does all these things and now what would it be for the people of God that he brings into his house to come in and take a look around at everything and with a mighty sweep of an arm clear off the table of all the things that God has prepared and say, "I have brought something that I would like to be here in this house and in this fellowship. I have my own human inventions that I believe are appropriate for this fellowship with thee, the living God." That simply wouldn't work. That's an appalling thought that any naked beggar would come into the house of God and sweep things away and say, "God, you made a mistake in how you set up my place. I have a better way to do it."

That worship of God with God, who himself must determine all the aspects of that worship, all the elements of that worship, is exactly what we mean by the regulative principle of worship. Now, whether that word or that term is necessary can be questioned. That term does not come out of the Confessions. That term is meant to express the truth, though, that the Confessions do teach and the Confessions teach regarding the worship of Jehovah that God himself must set the worship, God himself must give the worship, he must give all the elements of that worship because God alone knows what pleases him. We blind, poor, naked beggars don't know what pleases God. God alone knows what pleases him, what kind of a dinner he wants to have, how that fellowship is going to look. So God himself must give that worship and give the elements of that worship.

The regulative principle is expressed in Question 96 this way, "What doth God require in the second commandment? That we not worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word." That regulative principle is also taught in the Belgic Confession, Article 32 on the order and discipline of the church. That article begins that it

is "useful and beneficial for the rulers of the church, for the elders to make decisions with regard to some things in the church and even to establish certain ordinances among themselves for the worship of the church, yet they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. And therefore, we reject all human inventions and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever. Therefore, we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God." Especially the line in that article, "we reject all human inventions and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever." Both of these Confessions are speaking of the worship of the church and both of these Confessions say that that worship must be done the way God has commanded and it may not be done in any way that God has not commanded. That's the regulative principle of worship.

The regulative principle of worship is that in the worship of God, God himself alone decides how he is to be worshiped. The opposite of the regulative principle of worship would be that in the public worship of God man decides how man would worship God. The regulative principle is that we not worship God in any other way than he has commanded in his word, and note with regard to the regulative principle that it is not this: you may worship God in any way not expressly forbidden in his word so that you may arrange the elements of worship the way you desire. As long as God does not forbid it, then you may do it. That's not the regulative principle. That's not our Confessions on the matter of worship. Our Confessions on the matter of worship is worship God in no other way than he has commanded in his word.

Now, there are certain features of that regulative principle or certain details that help flesh out what that regulative principle is. In the first place, the regulative principle deals with the public worship of the church and not the private worship of an individual in his home. It's the regulative principle of worship. The regulative principle of worship says in this assembly you may only worship God in the way he has commanded and you may not worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word. The regulative principle of worship does not apply as the regulative principle of worship to your home and the devotions you have around your dinner table. The Confessions make clear that it is the public worship of Jehovah, especially in Belgic Confession 32, which says we reject all human inventions or any laws of man whatsoever that he would introduce into the worship of Jehovah to bind the conscience whatever, and the whole context of that article is what the church does through her office-bearers.

We reject human invention in the matter of the public worship of Jehovah. The fact that the regulative principle applies only to the public worship is also evident from the fact that you simply cannot do in your home what is done in church. You cannot preach a sermon. I cannot preach a sermon in my home, I preach a sermon in church. You cannot administer baptism or the Lord's Supper in your home, you do that in the assembly of God's people. You don't read a passage of scripture in church and then read a devotional that explains that passage, but you might do that in your home.

The regulative principle applies to the public worship of the church. There will be an echo of that principle in your home, not the principle but an echo of that principle, that is, when it comes time for family devotions, you will not decide that for devotions tonight we're going to watch the basketball game on television, and the watching of that basketball game is going to be our worship of Jehovah because we all get very excited about that basketball game and it makes us feel really good to watch that basketball game and God must be pleased when we feel really good about what we're doing. No one would propose that they watch the basketball game instead of devotions. The echo of the principle in the home will be that your devotions will be the word and prayer. The word and prayer, but the regulative principle itself applies to the public worship of the church.

A second detail regarding the regulative principle is that it applies to the elements of the worship service and not to the circumstances of the worship service. The regulative principle governs the actual worship, not all of the things that are simply attached to the actual worship as the circumstances and ordinances that there have to be for that worship to take place. What's the actual worship of the church? It is the preaching of the gospel. It is the administration of the sacraments that go with the gospel. It is calling upon the name of the Lord in prayer. It is calling upon the name of the Lord in song. And it is the giving of offerings. Those are the actual elements of worship. That's what you do in your worship. The circumstances are merely all those things that attend the element. What time you meet, that's not an element of worship. The regulative principle has nothing to say about the time of worship except the Lord's Day. The regulative principle doesn't govern which tunes you use to sing the songs in church. God doesn't care what tunes you use to sing the songs, the singing is the worship. Whether there's instrumental accompaniment or not is not part of the regulative principle, here's where the term is abused by many to require that there be no instruments in worship. God doesn't care if you sing with an organ, a piano, or without any accompaniment whatsoever, with a harmonica, with a guitar whatsoever, the instrument is simply a circumstance that attends the worship of the church. The regulative principle applies to the elements of worship and not to the circumstances.

In the third place, the detail of the regulative principle is this, that there may be no human inventions in the elements of worship. That's the language of our Belgic Confession, we reject all human inventions and all laws of man understand, which he would introduce into the worship of God thereby to bind the conscience in any manner whatever. There may be no human invention of man's pleasure, man's tradition or man's scruples. Man's pleasure would be that man says swiping his arm on God's Table, "I have something that pleases me better than what you have laid out. It pleases me to worship this way and not that way and therefore my pleasure shall determine this worship." No human inventions.

Man's tradition may also not be the rule or the human invention for worship. Just because my father and my grandfather did it a certain way, that is no justification for the church continuing to do it that way. No human inventions, even if they've been around for a long time. And there may be no human scruples of man that govern the worship service. A scruple is a feeling that is guided by a conviction. It may even be a feeling guided by a principle. You have a conviction about something, your conviction might even be right.

You have a principle, it might even be a biblical principle. But now you have feelings that are guided by that conviction and feelings that are guided by that principle. You wouldn't be human if you didn't. When we condemn someone as being unscrupulous, that's not a compliment to that person. It means that person has no problem doing whatever he wants because he has no convictions or no principles. But the worship of the church may not be governed by the scruples of a man, that is, a man has a certain negative feeling and a certain unease with the circumstances of worship, a man has a certain unease even about how the principle is applied in worship, that scruple which literally means a sharp little stone that's in his brain, or a sharp little stone under his saddle, that man tries to make that sharp little stone the sharp little stone of everyone so that now because of the scruples of one man the whole church wonders, "Now may we do this? May we not do this? We're doing this according to the word. Of God, but is this right or is this wrong?" That, too, the scruples of men are a human invention. The scruples of men may not rule the worship of the church. I preach to myself as I preach to you.

No human invention may be introduced into the worship of Jehovah. Why? Because it's the worship of Jehovah. We are dealing with Jehovah God. Jehovah God who is a spirit. He is not material, not made-up of stuff, and therefore you and I by our will cannot determine how to worship him. And Jehovah is not only a spirit but he is glorious. That's the positive side of him not being made of stuff. God is his perfections. He is love. He is righteous. And those perfections shine out from him with divine blinding light and there is no man who is able to approach unto that light and by his own will say, "Now I know how to worship this God." God will not give the glory of his own worship to another. Not only this, he won't let us bow down to wood and stone as the worship of him so that we give his glory to that wooden stone but this, he won't let us come into his house and swipe off his table and say, "I have a human invention that belongs here better than what thou hast revealed pleases thee."

This is the worship of Jehovah God and that means that that worship must be theocentric in its very nature. Not only the gospel that is proclaimed to you as theocentric but the worship of Jehovah is theocentric, you love that in your doctrine, you love that in your gospel. The Spirit of Christ in your heart loves theocentric doctrine and so also in your worship the church loves that theocentric worship. "I want to worship God in no other way than he has commanded in his word. I want to bring in no human invention. I want the garment he has provided. I want the food that he has prepared. I want the nourishment and the life and the riches that he has given, and that's all I want in the worship of his name."

That regulative principle, or rather within that regulative principle there is God, and outside of that regulative principle there is man. Within that regulative principle is the will of God that sets the feast, that prepares the house. Outside of that regulative principle is the will of man which seeks with a show of wisdom but which is nothing but will worship, according to Colossians 3, to bring in human inventions. This matter of the worship of the church is very, very important. It's important to God. Remember, he loves to dwell with you. He delights in it. Just as this is your one desire to dwell in the house of

the Lord, so it is the good pleasure of God to dwell with his church. And God hates will worship, striking Uzzah dead when Uzzah, following the lead of David, decided to transport the ark according to his own will and not according to the will of Jehovah.

Jehovah loves the worship of the church. He delights in it and he sets the whole table for it. That applies to the question of what the church shall sing in her worship. The question now is does that regulative principle apply to exclusive psalmody so that the church is required by God to sing the Psalms in her public worship? Note that the question is not this, it is not is the church permitted to sing more than the Psalms, that is, is the church permitted to sing hymns, the Psalms being the 150 Psalms that God has given us in the Psalm book and hymns being not inspired compositions of men? And those hymns can run the gamut from vry sound and doctrinally orthodox hymns, not inspired but expressing truly the doctrine of the Bible, to what's not much more than a campfire song or a little ditty that might have the name God in it somewhere. That is totally arminian and that is completely empty of any sound doctrine.

In the one category are the Psalms, those 150 God-inspired songs, and in the other category are the hymns which are not the inspired songs of God but the songs composed by men about God. The question is, does the regulative principle apply to exclusive psalmody? The answer is it does. The regulative principle requires that the church sings the Psalms. That can be demonstrated from scripture. In the first place, there is one book in the Bible of inspired songs, one book where those inspired songs have been collected, one book that the Lord has given over to his church for her singing in the worship services. That was the teaching of David in 2 Samuel 23:1-2. "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." The sweet psalmist of Israel, the man who wrote the Psalms was inspired to write those Psalms by Jehovah. His Spirit was in him and he was the sweet psalmist of Israel so that when Israel gathered together the songs that she sang were the Psalms.

These were the songs given to them. That can be demonstrated further from Deuteronomy 32. Deuteronomy 32 is an overlooked but exceedingly important chapter. Deuteronomy 32 is a song. It was a song that God gave to Moses which Moses was to teach to the people of Israel just as they were about to enter into the Promised Land, and it was a song that was to remain with Israel through all her history. This was the song of the Old Testament church and it was a song that was given by God to his people to be a constant witness to them and against them. It would be a constant witness to them that they were unfaithful in themselves. That's all they ever were, unfaithful, and that unfaithfulness goes on verse after verse. And it would be a witness to them that God was faithful, and it goes on verse after verse how God visited them and took them back and restored them and redeemed them. That song that was intended to be Israel's song all her days, appears in many of the Psalms so that it is in the Psalms that this song of the church about the faithfulness of God over against the unfaithfulness of his people has been taken up so that when the church sings the Psalms today, she's singing this song of the church, Deuteronomy 32.

It can also be shown that the Psalms were the normative practice of the New Testament church, that is, when the New Testament church worshiped in her public assembly, what she did in the elements of that worship were not merely descriptive telling us how it looked, but prescriptive telling us what was to be done. Jesus and his disciples, for example, at the last Passover when Christ finished the Passover and instituted the Lord's Supper, which is prescriptive for the church, also sang what the King James translates a hymn, but that hymn that they sang was Psalms 113 through 118. It was the Hallel. It was the rejoicing in God and the honoring of Jehovah. That's prescriptive for the church too. And now if one wants to maintain that the position of the regulative principle permits hymns, that is, non-inspired songs, then not only is this the case that you must find in scripture a requirement to sing hymns. You must find in scripture a requirement to sing hymns. We don't permit human inventions. Worship God only as he has commanded in his word. And not only must you find a specific command to sing hymns, non-inspired songs, but then you must also do it. You must sing hymns in church. You must have a Psalter hymnal. You may not have only a Psalter. And you may not have only a Psalter with one hymn or two hymns. God said sing hymns and that would mean keep writing them, keep adopting them, keep singing them.

The worship of Jehovah in the matter of singing requires the Psalms and exclusive psalmody. The Lord Jesus Christ himself sang Psalms. When the Lord walked on this earth, as you are well familiar by now as members of this church, when the Lord walked on this earth he sang the Psalms. That was his worship of Jehovah and those Psalms were written by his Spirit. That Spirit that was in David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, was the Spirit of Christ. That Spirit means that all of the Psalms are the word of Christ. According to Colossians 3, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly singing with the Psalm book." That word of Christ does not merely mean this, Jesus inspired the Psalms the way he inspired Jeremiah. It means this, that those words of the Psalms are Jesus' words. He sings them.

We have seen that in the Psalms in tremendous ways, ways that probably have taken us by surprise. Everyone knows that Jesus sang Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Everyone knows that but we have seen Jesus sing in Psalm 18 in a way that opened that Psalm up. In Psalm 18 Jesus sings of the reward of righteousness, not the reward of grace, not the reward that is given as something for nothing, but the reward of righteousness, that is, something given for something. "The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight." That can only be Jesus' words and when the church sings those words, she's singing with Jesus about Jesus. But it's Jesus' own words. Or Psalm 38. Psalm 38, Jesus confesses his sin. "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine

iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness."

Now Jesus personally never committed any sin but all of your sin was so really counted as his that this is his song, "My sins, my foolishness, my iniquity." And it was for those sins which were very really his own, not personally committed by him but very really his owned by the imputation of God to him, it was for the sake of those sins that he suffered the curse of God upon the tree. These are the Psalms of Jesus. These are his words. And now how does that operate in the church of Jesus Christ? Not just this way, that when we strike up a chord and sing a song Jesus comes down and sings with us, but this way, Jesus Christ is in the house of God. Jesus Christ fellowships there with Jehovah God. When his people come into the church, that's Christ in the church. And Christ in the church glorifies God with his own mouth with God's own words. That's the function of the Psalms. That's the theology of the Psalms in the worship of the church.

Jesus says that in Psalm 22, "In the midst of my brethren will I sing praise unto thee," and that's quoted in Hebrews 2 as the proof that Jesus Christ came into our flesh because he counts us his brethren. "You are my brethren and in the midst of the great congregation will I sing praise unto thee." Jesus worships God with God's own words in the singing of those Psalms. There's no indication in scripture anywhere that that happens with any other songs, with any other hymns that are not inspired and written by men so that when the church sings a hymn, Jesus isn't singing that, that's not the theology of the Psalms, it's not how the Psalms work, it's not how song works in the church. That's Christ in the Psalms. He's the singer of them. He's the sweet psalmist of Israel who continues to sing those songs in the church for and with his people.

This matter of Christ and the regulative principle goes way deeper, way, way deeper in the matter of what Jesus sings in the church. It goes this deep, that Jesus has fulfilled the regulative principle for First Reformed Protestant Church. He's fulfilled it already. The regulative principle is the second commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images." Jesus fulfilled the second commandment. First RPC is not under the regulative principle of worship in her worship. You're not under it. If you are under that regulative principle of worship in your worship, that would mean that you had to fulfill that regulative principle perfectly, that you had to fulfill that regulative principle not only with regard to what happens, but the perfection of those things happening. The regulative principle doesn't just say take a Psalm, it says take a Psalm and shout from the bottom of your heart. It doesn't just say have a sermon, but it says believe that sermon, listen to that sermon.

The people of God, if they were under the regulative principle for their salvation, for their acceptance with God, would never get to him. He'd never get in the house to his dinner. But Christ fulfilled it because when he came to earth, he worshiped God exactly as God required. And he still does. He always has and always will worship God absolutely perfectly. That's your freedom. That's the liberty of the gospel for the church. And now the church hearing that loves that regulative principle. You couldn't love it if you were under it. You'd have to hate it. It would be nothing but a scourge and a whip on you all

your days, but the church of Jesus Christ hearing the gospel of Christ who has fulfilled the regulative principle, loves the regulative principle. He doesn't want any human inventions. Who wants human inventions when God has prepared for us all things in this fellowship with him? She doesn't want to worship God any other way than he's commanded in his word. Who would want to do that knowing what the church knows about the perfect obedience of Christ?

This regulative principle then for the church is very, very precious. It's a dear matter to her. It's not a matter of terror for her. It's not a matter for her of feeling uncomfortable about the worship of Jehovah for Jehovah God delights to dwell with you and he has prepared all things in this worship for you and brings you into that table and feeds you and nourishes you and gives you your singing, gives you the Spirit to pray to him, gives you the love of him to give your offering, and gives you your whole worship in his covenant mercy. That's the regulative principle of worship as taught by our Confessions on the basis of the word of God. God be praised for the worship that he gives. Amen.

Our Father, which art in heaven, we thank thee for thy word. Wilt thou bless it to our hearts, apply it that we may be fat and nourished by the gospel of the body and blood of Christ, and wilt thou so regulate our worship that we may do all things in gratitude to the glory of thy name, that we may worship thee as thou hast