

THE DEITY OF GOD

PART FOUR

GIVING GLORY TO GOD

IN OUR STUDIES of the Scriptures, we frequently come across such expressions as “giving glory to God,” or “to God be the glory.” Peter, in one of his letters, uses the phrase, “that in all God may be glorified,” and Paul presses his readers at Corinth to “do all for the glory of God.”

Let us consider together some of the ways by which men, in spite of their fleshly weaknesses and sinning propensities, ought still to be glorifying God, and in particular, how we as believers should be doing so, especially in view of our deeper appreciation of His deity.

One method is by attributing to God all that is rightly His, and by thanking Him accordingly for all the benefits received from Him. This has been stressed in previous studies and is most important. It is the Creator’s demand of His creation.

We are today surrounded on all sides by indifference to God. We are living in what is largely a pagan world. Paul’s great indictment of men as a whole (in Romans 1) is embodied in the phrase that, “knowing God, not *as God* do they glorify or thank Him.”

It is not that they do not know Him. They cannot plead ignorance of His existence. The evidence of God all around, in the things that grow and the things that move, leaves them without excuse. Because of this and because they refuse to glorify God and thank Him, they become subject to His indignation.

GIVING THANKS TO GOD

The glorification of God lies in the creature’s appreciation of Him as the Source from Whom all blessings flow, as well as the Power through which all is sustained; the expressions of thanks are evidences that such appreciation is there, and is genuine. That is why Paul lays such emphasis upon our being thankful. “In everything be giving thanks,” he told the Thessalonians, “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess.5:18). “And everything, whatever you may be doing in word and in act,” he wrote to the Colossians, “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, the Father, through Him” (Col-3:17). In Ephesians he says, “Be filled full with spirit . . . giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to our God and Father” (Eph.5:19-21).

Superabundance of thanksgiving is the apostle’s constant plea. “In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Phil.4:6). Let us note that our thanks should precede, or at least accompany, our requests to God. We can always thank Him again when our requests are granted.

Thanks are not necessary to God, but they gratify His heart. They are necessary for us, and for several reasons. They remind us constantly of His goodness. They acknowledge Him as the Giver. They help to convince us of our utter dependency upon Him. They inculcate in us a true spirit of subjection, and in all this we glorify Him.

We glorify Him because we acknowledge Him as the Deity. We know Him and add to that knowledge by our recognition of Him *as God*. This is the meaning of the Greek word, *epignosis* (ON-KNOWLEDGE). In Romans 1:28, it is translated “recognition.” In Colossians 1:9,10 the same word is translated “realization.” This is a further stage of “knowledge.” Mankind as a whole does not have any recognition of God as the Deity;

blessed indeed are we if we are growing into a full realization of Him. And the greater that this realization becomes, the deeper will be our thanks to Him Who creates it in our hearts.

There are several cases in Scripture where people are recorded as glorifying God by giving thanks for favors and blessings received. There is for example the case of the Samaritan leper, recorded in Luke 17. He was one of ten who were healed by Jesus, but the only one who perceiving he was healed returned "glorifying God with a loud voice." And he fell on his face at the feet of Jesus to thank Him. How typical is this of conditions today! For every one who acknowledges God and thanks Him, nine (or perhaps ninety-nine) accept gifts from His hands and take them all as a matter of course.

Another instance, mentioned in Luke 18, concerns the blind beggar outside Jericho, who was given sight by Jesus. In verse 43 we read that he followed Jesus, glorifying God, and that the entire people perceiving it gave praise to God. Our actions in glorifying God, by thankfully acknowledging Him as the Provider of all the blessings we enjoy, may influence others to perceive their own indebtedness to Him.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

The two instances just quoted were the result of miracles performed by Jesus when He was on earth, but there was one miracle of His in which God was particularly glorified, and the account of this contains so many wonderful and instructive points that it is well worthy of frequent examination. We refer to the raising of Lazarus in John 11.

"Now there was a certain infirm man, Lazarus from Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Now it was Mary who rubs the Lord with attar and wipes off His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was infirm. The sisters, then, dispatch to Him (Christ), saying, Lord, lo, he of whom Thou art fond is infirm. Yet Jesus, hearing it, said, This infirmity is not to death, but for the glory of God..."

What, can God be glorified in infirmity? Are *our* infirmities also to the glory of God? Let us read on, and see what happens in the case of Lazarus.

"This infirmity is not to death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God should be glorified through it." Here, a new factor is brought into the picture. It is not infirmity, for infirmity's sake, that glorifies God, but that some facet of the Divine character or purpose should be displayed through it. In this case it is the power of God's operations in Christ; on a later occasion it would be the power of God's operations in Paul (2 Cor. 12:9). Here Jesus was being given the opportunity of demonstrating beyond any peradventure that He was indeed the Son of God, with power over death and the grave. And so, as we read on, we find that Jesus remained where He was for two days after hearing the news, although it is specially stressed that He loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

In the meantime we find from verse 19 that Martha and Mary were not lacking in visitors. Many Jews came to comfort them concerning their brother, but the One they wanted most and Who could help them most stayed away with seeming indifference. And when eventually Jesus did arrive—tardily as it seemed to them—each sister reproached Him in turn with identical words, "Lord, if Thou wert here, my brother would not have died." The same theme was also taken up by some of the crowd who said, "Could not this One Who opens the eyes of the blind man, also make it that this man should not be dying?"

How often we, too, think like that! We are living in the days of expectancy of His coming, and all around us our friends are falling asleep. "If only the Lord would come, and gather us to Himself, we need no longer remain in our infirmities! If only the Lord had come sooner, this brother or that brother need not have died." Or again, "Is there any necessity for all the mounting sorrow that there is in the world? If God would only hasten His purpose and cut short this evil day!" Such are often the burdens of our complaints. But God's

purpose will not be hurried. Our infirmities are for His glory, and creation's travail is also for His glory.

Which gives the greater glory to God, the healing of the sick or the rousing of the dead? Which is the greater manifestation of His power? Had Jesus not tarried, Martha and Mary might truly have been spared two days of sorrow, but neither they nor we living nearly two thousand years later would have had that demonstration of the resurrection power of God which was provided by the calling forth of a dead Lazarus from the tomb. Neither would we have known that Jesus could weep!

"Jesus weeps" is one of the shortest, if not the shortest, statement in Scripture, but one that reveals much. The heart of the Son of God was touched. Though Jesus knew that He had come to conquer death, the immediate plight of humanity created in Him a tremendous bond of sympathy. And we are not to assume that He was really indifferent during those two days that He had delayed His coming. Doubtless His heart ached to be with the sorrowing sisters in their distress, but He held back in deference to the greater need of a supreme demonstration of God's glory.

In all this, Jesus mirrors His Father. God is not indifferent to all the suffering of humanity, nor to the afflictions of those who are His chosen ones. He rejoices with us in our joys, and sympathizes with us in our sorrows. Brother A. E. Knoch has a beautiful comment on the matter, "Why does God allow evil? Why does He not hasten to remove it? All that is needed is His presence. But He delays. His delay confirms the great truth that evil as well as good is from Him. It is the necessary foil for the display of His glory."

It would seem from a careful reading of the context that though Jesus indeed tarried, the sisters of Lazarus were not left without consolation. When Jesus eventually arrived, Martha made a remarkable declaration of faith. "Yes, Lord," she said, "I have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, Who is coming into the world."

Now, when Peter made a similar declaration on another occasion, Jesus responded by saying, "Happy are you, Simon Bar-jonah, seeing that flesh and blood does not reveal it to you, but my Father Who is in the heavens" (Matt. 16:17). Did Martha's conviction come from any less exalted source than Peter's? Surely to her, it was a Divine revelation as well! And with her assurance came an expectation, and in holding fast to that even in affliction and distress, she glorified God. We too, though surrounded by a world of suffering and often suffering in ourselves, have a yet more glorious expectation than Martha's, which enables us to rise above our environment and to glorify God in seeing beyond present experiences. And (did it but know it) the entire creation, groaning and travailing together until now and subjected to vanity, not voluntarily but because of Him Who subjects it, has an expectation too—an expectation of "being freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God." Would that creation were aware of its wonderful future!

Comparatively little is told us about that happy family of Bethany, and yet all that is said is both interesting and significant. Martha, in spite of that one rebuke from the Lord about her over-worry concerning temporal things (a rebuke which many of us could equally justly apply to ourselves!) was a very lovable character with an exceedingly strong faith. We have seen that both sisters used identical words in upbraiding Jesus for His delay in coming to their succor, but whereas Mary was content to say, "Lord, if Thou wert here, my brother would not have died," Martha supplemented this by adding, "But even now I am aware that whatever Thou shouldst be requesting of God, God will be giving it to Thee." Following this declaration by Martha came that intimate conversation between her and the Lord which ended by Jesus asking, "Are you believing this?" and Martha's reply, "Yes, Lord, I have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, Who is coming into the world." Truly, Martha glorified God in believing, and one of the ways in which we can most truly glorify God is in believing also.

FAITH IN THE DEITY OF GOD

Believe God. Believe Him in times of blessing. Believe Him in times of adversity. Believe Him and trust Him.

By putting our trust in God, we affirm our faith in His deity. We acknowledge Him to be the Supreme, Who is operating all according to the counsel of His will, and Who is working all together for the good of those who are loving Him.

We acknowledge His right to bring afflictions upon us, and to give us the strength and courage to rise above them when they cannot be pushed on one side. None of them are allowed to separate us from His love in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Rather in them we are more than conquering through Him Who loves us.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Job is the name that stands out as an example of endurance in affliction. It is noteworthy that the term "the One Who suffices" (in the King James Version: The Almighty) first used in connection with Abram in Genesis 17:1, occurs no less than thirty-one times in the book of Job, nearly twice as often as in the rest of the books put together. Through his afflictions, Job grew in the realization of the deity of God, so much so that, when they were over, he was able to say of God, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5). Afflictions are beneficial from an educational aspect, and we may glory in them as such, realizing that they produce endurance, and endurance testedness, and testedness expectation (Rom.5:3,4). Let us not grieve because of them, but rejoice.

TEMPLES OF GOD

When Jesus was walking with His disciples, He said, "In this is My Father glorified, that ye may be bringing forth much fruit" (John 15:8); and the same principle is true of us. Paul desired the Corinthians "by all means" to glorify God in their bodies (1 Cor.6:20), putting away all evil practices and remembering that their bodies had become sacred temples by reason of the Spirit of God which dwelt in them. The promise that God would be a Father to them and that they should be sons and daughters to Him, should be an incentive to them to cleanse themselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit and to complete holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor.6:14-7:1).

But pollution of God's temples is not confined to the continuance of evil practices of the flesh; it is also to be found in the harboring of false prejudices, the cherishing of ideas which are unsupported by Scripture, the building up of theories and doctrines that are dishonoring to God. Each of us has a responsibility in this matter to make sure that he or she believes and proclaims the truth according to the Scriptures.

Having a true foundation is not always enough; even upon this we may build of wood, grass and straw, and in such cases our work will be destroyed, as by fire. How much better to build of gold, silver and precious stones, that our work may abide in the day of testing!

It is in 1 Corinthians 3 that Paul describes this testing process, and following verse 15 where he says, "if anyone's work shall be burned up, he will forfeit it, yet he shall be saved, yet thus, as through fire," he immediately adds, "Are you not aware that you are a temple of God and the Spirit of God is making its home in you? If anyone is corrupting the temple of God, God will be corrupting him, for the temple of God is holy, which you are. Let no one be deluding himself. If anyone among you is presuming to be wise in this eon, let him become stupid, that he may be becoming wise, for the wisdom of this world is stupidity with God."

QUALIFIED TO GOD

How it behooves us to stand by the Word of God in its truth and purity and accuracy—by doing so, we glorify Him Who has given it to us. Let us not be engaging in controversy for nothing useful, to the upsetting of those who are hearing and reading, but rather let us be continually endeavoring to present ourselves qualified to God, unashamed workers, correctly cutting the word of truth. We should stand aloof from profane prattlings, for they will only lead on to more irreverence, especially in an era like the present, when men will not tolerate sound teaching, but their hearing being tickled, will heap up for themselves teachers in accord with their own desires, and indeed will turn away their hearing from the truth and will be turned aside to myths. (See 2 Tim.2:14-16; 4:2-4).

To Paul was committed an evangel based on the word of the cross. It was God's power for salvation, and Paul was in no way ashamed of it. As his ministry approached its end, he committed it to Timothy with an injunction to guard it through the holy spirit which is making its home in us (2 Tim.1:13,14). Timothy, in turn, was to commit it to faithful men who would be competent to teach others also. It was an evangel in which works of flesh have no part whatever—in which, on the contrary, "All is of God." Let us not adulterate the Word of God, but, by manifestation of the truth concerning the evangel, commend ourselves to every man's conscience in God's sight (2 Cor.4:2).

THE TIE OF MATURITY

Finally, another way in which we can give glory to God is in the manner of our treatment of each other. A hasty criticism, an unkind word, a thoughtless action, may give pain to someone with whom we associate. In his Colossian letter, Paul tells us to "put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, pitiful compassions, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another and dealing graciously among yourselves, if anyone should be having a complaint against any." The pattern for this gracious dealing is to be the Lord Himself. "According as the Lord also deals graciously with you, thus also you. Now over all these put on love, which is the tie of maturity" (Col.3:12-14).

In short, we are to be "mutually disposed" towards one another. Paul uses this expression several times. In 2 Corinthians 13:11 he says, "Furthermore, brethren, rejoice, adjust, be entreated, be mutually disposed, be at peace, and the God of love and of peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss." A holy kiss is not just putting your lips against someone else. This is common practice in the world. A holy kiss is when you can greet another, knowing full well that what emanates from your mouth is truth and always in love and in the interests of the one you are greeting. A mouth that will never speak evil of a brother can give that brother a holy kiss. In Philippians 2, Paul says again, "If, then, there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any communion of spirit, if any compassion and pity, fill my joy full, that you may be mutually disposed, having mutual love, joined in soul, being disposed to one thing—nothing according with faction, nor yet according with vainglory—but with humility, deeming one another superior to one's self, not each noting that which is his own, but each that of the others also." And once more the pattern is to be our Lord Himself, "for," continues Paul, "let this disposition be in you which is in Christ Jesus also, Who being inherently in the form of God . . . nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave" (Phil.2:5-7).

Christ pleased not Himself, Paul told the Romans before continuing, "Now may the God of endurance and consolation grant you to be mutually disposed to one another, according to Christ Jesus, that, with one accord, with one mouth, you may be glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore be taking one another to yourselves according as Christ also took you to Himself, for the glory of God" (Rom.15:3,5-7).

Yes, we may truly glorify God by walking in love, one with another, by striving earnestly to observe the terms of that hymn we delight to sing:

Blest be the tie that binds

Our hearts in Christian love.
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Blest are the sons of peace
Whose hearts and hopes are one,
Whose kind designs to serve and please
Through *all* their actions run.

Truly, the standard is a high one, but then, we are claiming to be sons of God!

To sum up, we have tried to show various ways in which we may exercise our privilege of glorifying God. This can be done by our subjecting ourselves to Him, by acknowledging Him in all things and thanking Him, by accepting evil (when it comes) as necessary in the outworking of His designs, by believing Him and trusting Him in all circumstances, by accepting infirmities and afflictions and living above them through holding fast to our glorious expectation, by developing the fruit of the spirit within ourselves, by standing by the unadulterated Word of God, and by walking in love with one another, dealing graciously with each other at all times.

And this we are praying, "that your love may be superabounding still more and more in realization and all sensibility, for you to be testing what things are of consequence, that you may be sincere and no stumbling block for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that is through Jesus Christ for the glory and laud of God" (Phil.1:9-11).

"And to Him be glory in the ecclesia, and in Christ Jesus, for all the generations of the eon of the eons! Amen!"
(Eph.3:21).

Copyright © Concordant Publishing Concern
15570 Knochaven Road, Santa Clarita, CA 91387, U.S.A. 661-252-2112

*This publication may be reproduced for personal use
(all other rights reserved by copyright holder).*