

More about Glory

John 17:4,5

We have said that to glorify God we must honor Him by acknowledging Him as the God He is. Jesus said of the Father, "I have glorified You on the earth..." This is a witness to Jesus' accomplishment of glorifying God by means of the things He said and did while He was here in this world. In John's introduction to the gospel we have, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus, the Son of God, was glorified and glorified the Father by living or presenting Himself to the world as grace and truth. By doing so, He revealed Himself and the Father to be the God He is.

How did He do so? Think about the Sermon on the Mount... The sermon begins with grace as Jesus spoke the beatitudes. The grace in the beatitudes looks beyond the surface to see the value of the heart that seeks those attitudes that are precious in God's eyes. The beatitudes remind us that what God thinks of us is much more important than what others think of us or of what we think of ourselves. It is the nature of life that we are not guaranteed a fair shake. Some are born with a golden spoon. Some, never have a chance. The "self-made" man owes his success to opportunities that are out of his control. Wealth and power and fame - the most common human measures of success are simply not possible for all. But, material advantage or disadvantage have nothing to do with being poor in spirit, mourning over sin, showing mercy, being a peacemaker, seeking righteousness, and being meek and pure in heart. In fact the human measures of success are most likely to be distractions from the more important qualities that indicate whether or not we are pleasing God in our lives.

Then Jesus spoke truth. You have heard it said, but I say unto you... and Jesus challenged the assumptions of the temple and the culture that had removed God from His own Word and Law. The expanding of responsibility from actions alone to include responsibility for mind and heart was truth that if taken to heart would

stand as a bulwark against the spiritually disastrous spirits of pride and self-righteousness.

But then Jesus spoke grace as He challenged His followers to choose to respond to oppression by turning the other cheek, giving your cloak, going the extra mile and loving your enemy and praying for those who seek to harm you. In each case by following Jesus teaching the disciple would be free in spirit and thus capable of joy in the most trying of circumstances. Grace is the experience of contentment that is not circumstantial but spiritual resting in our faith and trust in God.

Then Jesus spoke truth as He exposed the hypocrisy of the religious elite who practiced the disciplines in order to impress men rather than to please God. And it was truth that your treasure is where your heart is but grace to know that our loving Father who cares for the birds of the air cares much more for us and who adorns His world with the lilies of the field caring even more that our needs are met for if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness then all these things will be added unto us.

It is truth that God will judge us according to the way that we judge others. It is grace that God stands ready to give to them who ask, to provide for those who seek and to answer those who knock. It is grace to live the golden rule and truth that knows the way of life is the narrow path while it is the broad way that leads to destruction. Truth identifies false prophets and understands that our primary accountability is to Him. Grace speaks the word that provides for the opportunity to build your house on the rock that stands against the storms of life, triumph over every obstacle.

The presence of grace and truth is evident in all that Jesus said and did. This fact glorified both him and the Father as it revealed God to man as the God He is. But the next question is, how is that we as mere mortals would go about glorifying God?

Apparently this is possible though for Paul gave this word, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Paul made this admonition as concluding guidance that he offered after addressing a number of

controversial issues. The first was the eating of meat that was offered to idols, the second was the issue of compensation for ministers, and the third was the relationship between Jews and Gentiles within the church which was complicated by the very different cultures represented by each group. Each of these issues had become controversial and passions were running high on either side in each case.

In the case of meat offered to idols, one side saw the meat as part of the worship of the idolatrous. For them, to eat the meat was to worship idols. The other side knew that idols were not real for there is only one God. And meat is meat. So, if you are hungry and you have meat in front of you then thank God and eat it. If the meat came from the temple of the gods, what difference does that make? It's still meat.

There were numbers of ministers who made no bones about their right to be paid for their services. Logic supported this position for "Whoever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?" But, in Paul's case, he wanted to avoid the criticism of those who might accuse him of being in it for the money.

Then, the churches were composed of two very different groups. The Jewish Christians perceived their faith to be the fulfillment of what they already believed. Their conversion was from not knowing about Jesus to accepting that He was their Messiah. The Gentile believers converted from heathen and idolatrous practices to faith in Jesus as their Savior. This was a complete break from their past to a new and radically changed experience and way of thinking. The question was, how were these very different people with completely different perspectives to relate to each other?

Paul offered solutions to each of these situations and following his instruction would be to bring glory to God. In the case of the eating of meat, Paul respected both positions but gave priority to the spiritual well being of every individual. He did not want to give offense that would cause a brother to stumble. In ministry, he affirmed those who did receive compensation but declined to do so himself as he believed that in his case the gospel was better understood by making this

choice. As to the diverse cultures within the church Paul demonstrated that the sins of ancient Israel were very much the same as the heathen of their own day and that we are all subject to the same temptations, temptations that God will enable us to overcome as He has provided a way of escape so that we may be able to bear it.

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." How did Paul's instruction in respect to these issues bring opportunity for giving glory to God?

Each of Paul's answers reflected a grace that was to be extended to all people. It is grace to recognize the weaknesses of others and take a position to help them rather than to judge them. Paul did this in respect to each of the controversies. His solution was not to identify who was right but to show what was best. And, what was best was putting the welfare of your brother before that of yourself. Paul chose to love the people Jesus died for and to give grace to those whom God had also chosen to give grace. He chose to make personal sacrifices in order to give this grace and love which is what God also did through Jesus' death on the cross. Paul's advice was a confession of the character of God as it had taken root in his own heart and life. As Paul became an instrument of grace and truth in his leadership in the church he demonstrated the heart of God, and as such He lifted God up to the church as the God He is. Paul glorified God. And any believer with the faith and love and grace of God who took Paul's instruction to heart and adopted His spirit of humility and grace also glorified God. Jesus glorified God through His life and so can we.