

MESSAGE 2 – MANIFESTATION OF GOD’S GLORY

Introduction

- In this message, we continue our reflections on the importance and value of moral and spiritual stature from another angle: *Its relationship with the manifestation of God's glory*
- Believers would generally affirm that the glory of God ought to be the primary concern in their hearts and they would want to glorify God in their lives
- David, the man after God's own heart, testifies that he wants to glorify the name of the Lord forever:

Psalm 86:9-12

9 All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord,
And they shall glorify Your name.

10 For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God.

11 Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.

12 I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And will glorify Your name forever.

- Paul exhorts us to glorify God in all that we do:

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

- If the glory of God is of primary concern to us, we would want to know:
 - o When and how is God glorified?
 - o How can we glorify God in our lives?

Moral and spiritual stature of man - the very heart of how man can glorify God

- There are two aspects:
 1. Moral and spiritual stature of man in itself is very precious to God and manifests God's glory
 2. A person's moral and spiritual stature enables him to live a life pleasing to God and glorify God – in his conduct and ways
- The more a person has grown in moral and spiritual stature, the more he manifests God's glory in his being, and in his conduct and ways
- I will now explain and substantiate the following proposition:

The creation of moral beings – with the capacity to grow in moral and spiritual stature - enables a new category of the manifestation of God's glory which is very valuable and meaningful to God
- This category cannot exist without moral beings

Manifestations of God's glory before the creation of moral beings

- Point 1 – The glory and majesty of the perfect God is inherently present in the nature of His being and in His attributes

- o God's glory is manifested whenever His being and His attributes are manifested
 - His love, goodness, grace, His almighty power and perfect wisdom ...
 - The moral and spiritual beauty of God
- Point 2 – Whatever proceeds from the perfect almighty God, whatever He creates and does, will manifest His glory – as they are the expressions of His being, perfect will and wisdom

Romans 1:18-23

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

- o Failure to acknowledge and respect God's glory is a serious matter (v 23)
- o It is suppressing the truth in unrighteousness - expression of ungodliness and unrighteousness → wrath of God (vs 18, 19)

Psalms 19:1

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
 And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

- o If all that exists is God and what proceeds directly from Him, then total reality would manifest the glory of God – as total reality would consist of the being of God and His expressions
- Point 3 – Whatever occurs in creation would manifest the glory of God
 - o These occurrences in creation would be the direct result of how God has designed creation and would reflect His attributes – they are expressions of His being, perfect will and wisdom
 - o E.g. How flowers bloom, how animals behave, the state of the universe and movement of the stars and heavenly bodies
- To sum up: Before the creation of moral beings, all that exists and occurs would manifest the glory of God because they consist of God, what God has created, and occurrences that proceed directly from how God has designed creation – unsullied, untainted by any defect, deficiency or evil

Manifestations of God's glory after the creation of moral beings

- God has created moral beings who can choose to obey or disobey Him, do good or evil
- When they choose to disobey God and do evil, total reality would include expressions that do not glorify God
- However, with the existence of moral beings, when they choose to obey God, there now exists a category of the manifestation of God's glory which is very meaningful to God
- This new category has two related parts:

- o Moral and spiritual stature of moral beings
- o What flows forth from their moral and spiritual stature: expressions, conduct and ways which glorify God
- These expressions are not of God Himself, but expressions of other moral beings who can freely choose how they wish to live their lives, and yet choose to express themselves in ways that glorify God
- God is glorified as we worship Him, submit to Him and fulfil His perfect will for our lives, and as we participate meaningfully in the fulfilment of His purposes
- A powerful and beautiful imagery of how a man glorifies God is the way Job fell to the ground and worshipped God in spite of the terrible afflictions that came upon him (Job 1:20)
 - o An even more powerful illustration comes in the last chapter of Job – presented in a striking and unusual way – as Job expressed unqualified submission to God and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6)
 - o Job had been severely attacked by the evil one, his possessions had been destroyed, his children had perished, he was covered with boils, sitting among the ashes; he had suffered much physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually; he was misunderstood, maligned, despised, ostracised. Yet Job was worshipping and fully submitting to God, even before God restored his fortunes – and the questions that perplexed him still unanswered
 - o Job’s response vindicated God’s appreciation of him in Job 1:8 – “My servant Job ... no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil”
 - o It demonstrated the falsehood of Satan’s allegation that Job feared God because God was protecting Job and all he had from adversities
 - o The severity of Satan’s attacks did not destroy Job’s faith in God; on the contrary, it raised the quality of Job’s worship of God, and his faith in God and commitment to Him
- The Lord Jesus glorified God by accomplishing the work which God had given Him to do:

John 17:4
“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

 - o Likewise, we glorify God by bearing much fruit (as we abide in Christ and He in us) and so prove to be His disciples:

John 15:8
“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.
- In fact, we are to do all things to the glory of God:

1 Corinthians 10:31
Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

 - o How do we glorify God? By doing all things according to God’s will and enabling
- In Christ, man may manifest the glory of God in ways that are extremely rich and glorious in meaning. How?
 - o By growing in moral and spiritual stature
 - o By expressing his life in ways which glorify God

- This category of manifestation of God's glory requires man's positive moral response and moral input - unlike the other categories of the manifestations of God's glory before the creation of moral beings
- God can create all things – including moral beings – by His word; but God cannot bring about man's moral and spiritual stature by Himself. Neither can God, by Himself, bring about the positive moral and spiritual expressions of man which glorify God

Why and how moral and spiritual stature of man manifests God's glory

- Point 1 – God in His wisdom created man in His image, with capacity for moral and spiritual stature
- Point 2 – When we grow in moral and spiritual stature, we are fulfilling God's will for our lives - a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13)
- Point 3 – God enables man to grow in moral and spiritual stature

Paul's testimony in 1 Cor 15:10 indicates the need for man's positive response:

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

- Point 4 – When we grow in moral and spiritual stature, we become more and more like God in His character and ways, thus reflecting His glory continually – this kind of manifestation of God's glory is very precious and meaningful to God
- Point 5 – The moral and spiritual stature attained enables us to manifest God's glory in the way we live our lives
- It is God's will that we reflect His image and glory – that we be conformed to the image of Christ

Romans 8:29

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

- A life conformed to the image of Christ reflects God's image and glory since Christ is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature

Hebrews 1:3

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

- The more we become conformed to the image of Christ, the more we reflect God's glory

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

- Moral and spiritual stature of man is so important and valuable to God that He is prepared to create man as a moral being with the capacity to choose – even though He knew it would result in much evil, cruelty, suffering and pain, and the terrible suffering and agony of the Cross

God's provisions for man to grow in moral and spiritual stature

- God has initiated important measures and made significant provisions for man to grow in moral and spiritual stature:
 - o Sending the Lord Jesus Christ into this world: His teaching, His perfect example, His death, resurrection and ascension, and all that God has done and provided for us in Christ
 - o The outpouring and ministry of the Holy Spirit
 - o The Scriptures
 - o Church life
- God sovereignly watches over our daily lives, guiding, undertaking and helping us to grow in moral and spiritual stature
 - o Helping us to come to the point of conversion and salvation in Christ
 - o Helping us to grow in spiritual maturity
- A major thrust of the assurance of Rom 8:28 has to do with our moral and spiritual stature:

Romans 8:28-30

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

- o This has been God's will before the foundation of the world (predestined):
 - That we become conformed to the image of His Son (v 29)
 - That Christ would be the firstborn among many brethren (v 29)
 - That God's glory be manifested in and through our lives (v 30)

Concluding remarks

Paul's testimony regarding the importance of moral and spiritual stature

Colossians 1:24-29

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out *the preaching of the word of God*,
26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,

27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

- Christ is God's primary provision for us so that His intentions for us may be fulfilled
 - o Christ in you, the hope of glory (v 27)
 - This refers to the manifestation of God's glory in and through our lives as we are being transformed into the image of Christ

- Paul devoted his life to present every man complete or mature in Christ (vs 28-29)
 - o Paul knew this was God's call for his life – the heart of the ministry God entrusted to him

How can we glorify God in our lives?

- For ourselves: By growing in moral and spiritual stature (thereby manifesting and reflecting God's glory in our being) and seeking to glorify God in our conduct and ways, as we worship Him and submit to Him
- For others: By helping them to grow in moral and spiritual stature – that God may be glorified in and through their lives
- The goal of scriptural teaching and exhortations and God's provisions for us, is to bring about the following:
 - o That God's children may grow in moral and spiritual stature – becoming increasingly conformed to the image of Christ
 - o That together, we may manifest and reflect God's glory in our inner being and in all that we do
 - o That all these may take place in the midst of deep fellowship with God and with the brethren, as we seek to participate effectively in the fulfilment of God's purposes
- Our participation in the fulfilment of God's purposes include:
 - o Learning, growing and serving the Lord together with the brethren in the expression of body-life
 - o Being good ambassadors for Christ and helping others be reconciled to God, enter God's kingdom, and be integrated into healthy church life
- As we do these, we will together be manifesting the wisdom and glory of God