

## *Responding to God in Faithful Living*

Series – Heaven and Hell

Text: Selected

Message 4 (September 4, 2011)

### HEAVEN AND HELL AND THE GLORY OF GOD

#### Introduction

1. You have heard many exhortations to "glorify God." The Bible indicates that this is our reason for existence. I tried to say last week that the glory of God is the sum of all of His attributes. Perhaps a better way to say that is **"The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of His manifold perfections."** So, for us to glorify Him, we must give ourselves to seeing and savoring Him in all that He is.
2. Paul sharpened our understanding when he commanded us in very practical terms to glorify God in everything we do. The reason we are to glorify God is that God is a God of glory and that is the only appropriate way to respond to Him. Not to glorify God is to view Him as less than He is and thus to dishonor Him. He is very serious about His glory and we should be also. Remember the essence of sin involves our failure to respond appropriately to His glory (**"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"**).
3. Many centuries ago, there lived two PK's (priest's kids)! Their names were Nadab and Abihu and their story is briefly recorded in Leviticus 10. They offered up a censer of fire that was "profane" (unauthorized), not acceptable to the Lord (why, we are not told). The Lord sent fire from heaven and consumed them (in immediate judgment)! Then the word of the Lord came to Moses to be spoken to Aaron about the death of his two sons. "Among those who are near me, I will be sanctified (regarded as holy); and before all the people I WILL BE GLORIFIED." It is not an option to glorify God. It is a command by God Himself. Later David echoed the same instructions as the Ark of the Covenant passed into the tabernacle. "Give to the Lord the glory due His name."
3. Glorifying God involves our understanding of who God is and then of what we owe Him. If God's glory is the infinite beauty and greatness of His manifold perfections, then to glorify Him would be to see Him as perfectly loving, holy, faithful, just, good, merciful, righteous, all-powerful, all-knowing, gracious, sovereign, pure, etc. Since God is all of these things and these make up His glory, then I must...
  - Acknowledge Him as the possessor of all these attributes and
  - Accept whatever happens as being allowed by Him in view of who He is, and

- Act in accord with His attributes. That will accent the glory of God. As the psalmist said, "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name." Acknowledging His glory and accepting His glory and acting with a view toward His glory is what it means to bring Him glory!
4. Suppose I am faced with a tragedy in my family, someone is stricken with a terrible disease and dies. How do I respond if I give God glory? I acknowledge: "God, I know that you are good, righteous, faithful, etc. God, I accept these circumstances as Your perfect plan, because I know that You are..." (His perfections)." "God, what is it that you want me to learn, to do, to say, to become, as a result of this terrible event? What do you want to accomplish through my attitudes and my actions toward this suffering that will somehow speak well of you?" That would bring Him glory. Suppose it is just a small problem, like a flat tire. ("I don't need this now. I don't have the money to fix or replace this now. I don't have a spare..."). The same responses can be used to bring glory to God. (Acknowledge; Accept; Act and Accent God's glory).
  5. In our current series of study, the same is true in regard to heaven and hell. God knows what He is doing. What He does, will bring glory to Himself. His actions will show the grandeur of His person. By judging some for all eternity, He shows His glory in a picture of the awfulness of sin in contrast with the purity of His holiness. The magnitude of the suffering shows the magnitude of His suffering for the sins of many. By saving some He shows His glory in extending His love and mercy and grace in rescuing them from condemnation and certain judgment. **Both heaven and hell declare the glory of God.**
  6. As you know, since we spent so much time in Romans several months ago, that letter is an explanation of the Gospel. It speaks of our sin and condemnation, but also of God's great grace to rescue hopeless sinners and save them from God's wrath. As Paul worked through the doctrinally rich first 11 chapters, he threw up His hands in praise and wrote - ***Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*** Those verses are going to help us see and savor the glory of God.

## I. ALL HIS WAYS ARE GLORIOUS – WHETHER WE UNDERSTAND THEM OR NOT (and we won't)

A. The depths of God – Some things are known only to God. Others things are made known to us. We will never fully know the mind of God. Some have real problems with the judgment of God against sinners. Why would God save some and not others or all? It seems to me that a bigger question would be to understand the mercy of God and the grace of God toward sinners. Why does He save any? A far easier case could be made for our condemnation than for our redemption. But in each His glory is seen.

B. The unsearchable judgments of God

1. Let's return only briefly to some of what I shared last week. God judges the unrighteous. Those in hell remain unrighteous. They never repent. They never trust Jesus. Their lives are not reformed. They may be filled with regret that they are where they are, but not with repentance. The heart has not been changed. Thus what would be basis for a cessation of judgment?
2. In view of God's mercy as seen in the message of the Gospel – the sacrifice of Christ for our sins against the backdrop of a refusal to acknowledge His glory, makes a case for the appropriateness of His judgment. But still it is over our heads.
3. And then on the other side, the selfless sacrifice of Jesus for those of us who are saved, the pouring out of the wrath of God against my sin, but paid in full by Jesus, makes no sense. "And can it be that I should gain an entrance in my Savior blood..." How can it be? ***Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments?***

C. The inscrutable ways of God – The word means to be untraceable. We often are not able to pick up the path to see where it came from or where it is going. The ways of God are often imperceptible. Consider the paths of your life, how they twisted and turned to bring you where you are today. Consider the paths of God, the way of God. In regard to salvation, eternal life and judgment, eternal damnation, there are so many untraceable ways in His plan, but it is a glorious plan. How is it possible for all things to work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)? I don't know. I don't know the inscrutable plan of God, but I can revel in it because it leads to glory. All His ways are glorious whether we understand them or not!

## **II. ALL HIS WAYS ARE GLORIOUS WHETHER WE LIKE THEM OR NOT (and we may not)**

A. This is **His** plan

1. Psalm 19 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." Verse 4 says, "Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." And what are they saying? They are proclaiming the glory of God! Note Psalm 104 ... through verse 31. Psalm 148 (vv. 3-5,7) commands the created universe to praise Him and it does! People were also created for God's glory. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "*Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, **whom I created for my glory*** (43:6-7).
2. The point that Paul makes in Romans 1:19-21 is precisely that God who created all things for His glory and has brought them into full view so that He might receive the glory due His name, especially from the crowning achievement of His creation, (people), but people did exactly the opposite of what they were created to do. While the heavens declare the glory of God, people, though knowing God, did not glorify Him as God, but exchanged the glory of God for something that looked like them! Is there any wonder why the wrath of God was revealed against us? In fact the lesson from 2 Thessalonians 1:9 is that since many have chosen not to glorify God, they will be forever excluded from His glory (*They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and **from the glory** of His might*). His eternal plan in creation was for the praise of His glory.
3. Some do not like His plan. Some think it is unfair. Some believe they have figured out a better plan for how people are saved and how people are judged. It is His plan and it is a glorious plan whether we like it or not.

B. This is **His** purpose

1. God's purpose all along has been about His glory. He works all things after the counsel of His own will. God did not have a planning committee or an advisory team or establish focus groups. (Romans 11:34 - "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?")
2. It is a duty for which we were created and converted and commanded. Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, (command) do it all to the glory of God. To do so is to fulfill the very purpose for which we were created and converted. Not to do so is an utter foolish response to what we know and have experienced in God. We are no better than the heathen who has ignored the wonder of God and bows

before an idol of rock or wood, calling what he has made his God. What an affront to the one true God. Failing to bring Him glory is essentially the same. It is a duty. But it is more than that. It is my duty to take out the trash. It is my duty to mow the grass. I do those things but I do not often delight in them. I do not become giddy every Wednesday evening as I roll out the garbage can. But if I did, the duty might well become pleasure and the job might well become a joy. Instead of griping about the duty, I would bask in the sheer wonder of that opportunity. Sound crazy? It need not be so. All of His ways are glorious! All of them! He does everything after the counsel of His own will and His will is for His glory! ***For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.***

### **III. ALL HIS WAYS ARE GLORIOUS WHETHER WE ACKNOWLEDGE THEM OR NOT (but we should)**

- A. What are His ways? He leads us in paths of righteousness – Glory! He loves us – Glory! He disciplines us – Glory! He strengthens us – Glory! He provides for all our needs – Glory! He protects us – Glory! He equips us – Glory! He restores us – Glory! He forgives us – Glory! He heals us – Glory! He gives us sufficient grace – Glory! He renews our minds – Glory! He will come and take us to Himself - Glory! (And there are a thousand more)!
- B. It is a pure delight when we understand even a little, the glory of God and our great privilege and pleasure of basking in that glory. How do you eat and drink to the glory of God? How do you work and go to school and do your homework and whatever else we do to the glory of God? We begin with God and delight in Him. And as we delight in Him, we desire to do what pleases Him. As we find our satisfaction in Him, He is glorified in us! This truth is repeated again and again throughout the Bible. God is to be the recipient of glory. He alone is worthy to receive the glory due His name. Our response is to reflect that glory back to Him.

### **Conclusion:**

- 1. ***Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.***

2. Remember the Psalmist saying, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." At first we might have thought - this is good. If I just delight myself in the Lord, He will give me all kinds of good stuff and I like good stuff. This is my answer to get things. Well, that thinking is warped.
3. When I begin to delight myself in the Lord, when I am satisfied in Him, His desires become my desires. When I delight myself in Him, I want only to see that His name is magnified. And as I delight myself in Him, He is glorified. I have found my purpose in life and I could not be more thrilled.
4. God has been at work preparing us for His glory. We didn't prepare ourselves to know God's glory. God did that. And He did it out of "the same lump" of clay from which others came who do not love the glory of God (**Romans 9:21**). If we love His glory and savor His glory we didn't get there on your own. We were carefully shaped and sometimes pounded into a vessel prepared to know the glory of God.
5. Sometimes we need our hearts refocused, and the best place for that to happen is at the cross of Christ. There, in concentrated form, on full display, is the glory of God. As one author said, **This will focus your eyes and tune your heart and waken your taste buds so that you will see and hear and taste the glory of the true God everywhere.**
6. **"So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).** The glory of the riches of His grace is infinite, so it will take all the ages to come for us to know it fully! Our knowledge of the riches of the glory of God will increase throughout eternity – forever. And so will our joy. I was reading this week, "His mercies are new every morning." I don't think we will measure time in heaven, at least not in days, but you will know what I mean when I say, there will not be one boring day in heaven. Every day there will be fresh discoveries of the richness of the glory of God! With the accumulated weight of old glories ripening into the thrill of new glories – everyday it will be as Peter said, "Joy unspeakable and full of glory!"
7. **Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.**

