

Study 11. All for the Glory of God **(1 Peter 1:13—2:12)**

A fitting way to conclude this series on 'The shame and the glory' is to see what it means to live for the glory of God. The New Testament mentions numerous in which this may happen.

Jesus says the Father is glorified in our being fruitful by asking for what we want in his name and receiving this from the Father (Jo. 14:12-14; 15:7-8). Paul says God is glorified by our purity (1 Co. 6:20) or when we are enabled by him to fulfil our good intentions (2 Th. 1:11-12). He is glorified by righteous deeds that come through Christ, and confidence that our bodies will be vehicles of God's glory, not man's shame (Ph. 1:11, 20), especially in times of trial when it is not easy to act well.

God is glorified by the generosity of his people (2 Co. 8:19; 9:13), especially in times of poverty. He is glorified when believers who differ as to what is permissible welcome one another (Ro. 15:5-9; 1 Co. 10:31). The glory is seen to be from God because this kind of behaviour is not expected to arise from normal human resources. Glory is also brought to God by worship and thanksgiving (Ro. 11:36; 16:27; Ph. 4:20; 1 Ti. 1:17; 2 Ti. 4:18; Ps. 86:12).

This list could be used as a checklist—to do the things that bring glory to God—and that would miss the point. The reason God is glorified is because he is the reason for the action, and he is the person in mind when the deed is done and the one to be trusted to make the action useful. C. S Lewis said, 'Humility is not thinking little of self but not thinking of self at all.' The same could be said for love and for giving glory to God.

This God centredness of truly Christian action is highlighted when we see that God is glorified when we trust God and his promises (Ro. 4:20; 2 Co. 1:20) and when grace spreads to more people (2 Co. 4:15) and when everyone acknowledges that Christ is Lord (Ph. 2:11). God is glorified when our faith is contested but constant (1 Pe. 1:6-7). It is clear to all that God is the source of our faith.

Causing God to be glorified is not our *making* him more glorious. Rather, it is by *receiving* the glory he has caused to shine on us. It is by our continuing to make this the rule of our life that God's glory is recognised as the source of our life and service and hope. The Shorter Westminster Confession begins by asserting, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever'. These two things must remain together because one is not possible without the other.

The dynamics of our giving glory to God are opened up well for us in the Epistles of Peter. The word *glory* or *glorify* appears some 18 times through his letters. This may be simply because he likes the word but we recall that Peter knew about shame; and then, he knew about glory. He wanted the glory of being the one disciple who would not fail, and then failed. He was not above falling again into the trap of 'pleasing man' even as an apostle (Ga. 2:11-12) and needed to be recalled to the grace that freed him from this. It is not surprising then, that he mentions glory 14 times in his first letter. God raised Jesus from the dead and gave him *glory*, so our faith and hope are in God, and not in man (1:21). The glory revealed in the resurrection of Jesus is also a revelation of glory in us (Ep. 1:18-23). Peter is particularly sensitive to the shame that comes to Christians when they suffer for the gospel and tells them that the *glory* of God rests on them (4:13-16).

It is against this background that he calls us to good behaviour among unbelievers because, when God visits them, they will *glorify* God for what they have seen in us (2:12). In other words, the very glory of God (glory is always God's even when it is shared with us) has

shone through the behaviour of his children, and people will acknowledge that they have seen God at work. Jesus expected the same thing (Mt. 5:16).

Now here is a remarkable thing: God gets the glory for works we have done! It is remarkable, not for its seeming injustice but for its very truth. God is actually the source of our deeds and deserves the credit. We need to see clearly what it means to live for the glory of God. It is not primarily a duty, though it is that; it is a remarkable privilege. We were made for this specifically and experience great loss and degradation without it. Through Christ, the glory of being a human being is restored to us. We, whose lives had descended into all manner of shamefulness, may now be a revelation of God to those who don't know him.

Let Peter teach us how to live to the glory of God.

First comes *hope* for future grace (1:13). This hope is created by Christ's resurrection (1:3), as Peter well knew. It was a revelation of glory (1:21), and the glory was not only for Jesus but spilled over for Peter too.

John Piper has written a book called 'Future Grace'. The past grace of God inspires us to expect this throughout our life, and, as the reason for our acceptance at the last day. This is a major motivator of Christian behaviour.

This leads to the matter of being ready for action (1:13). What do we really want? Delaying suggests that we really have competing agendas. Do we want the glory of God? Clearly, God is not impressed with hypocrisy or lethargy. So we should be ready for action and with our hope set on the coming grace. We have tasted that the Lord is good and should long for the word that mediates this to us (2:2-3).

Next is obedience to God (1:14), not to placate him but to please him. We are *already* ransomed from this world so as to *live* for God (1:18). There is an element of fear in this, the kind of fear that love knows (2 Co. 5:11, 14). We cannot live to the glory of God unless we are conscious of him, and fear of him is the best way not to fear all the other threats that come. His command is that we be holy because he is. Effectively, God says, 'Be like me'. Jesus says the same (Ma. 5:48). On the other hand, conformity to this world is futile and fatal.

Then comes love and this is what our conversion has all been about (1:22). Peter calls it love that is filled with glory (1:8). This could mean we experience the glory but may well mean it is a revelation of God in us. John says God's love comes to its goal in us (1 Jo. 4:12).

All this is with a view to our proclaiming the virtues (or the moral glory) of God who called us out of darkness (2:9-12). God's glory is personal, and communicating and full of mercy. This is actually articulated (whether by many words or few) as personal address by the people he has raised up for this very purpose. He wants to be known and known by being merciful to his people. In this way, God is glorified, not just by us now, but by those who witness our lives and have to admit that God had been confronting them in the lives of his people.

This mercy of God is to be cherished and not overwhelmed with passions. Such passions are not just wrong; they prevent our receiving this mercy—or wage war against our souls.

Glorifying God is more than doing the right thing. It is living transparently, so that it is clear that the joy and hope of our life is Jesus Christ and the Father who sent him. People see this and glorify God. Our life has actually become a revelation of God himself. We are, indeed, the image and glory of God.