

Developing a High View of God

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

A few months back, I took time out of our study in the book of Colossians to remind you not only of the theme of *this* letter, but also what is the theme of the entirety of Scripture and what ought to be the theme found in each and every believer’s life. What is needed to be experienced in the church and then expressed to a world that is lost and dying in its sins is an unwavering, steadfast, impenetrable, unflinching commitment to having and maintaining the absolutely highest view of God possible. The believer should be unwilling to entertain, even for a moment, low views, wrong thinking, and demeaning sentiments about God. Beloved, we can never have too lofty of thoughts concerning God; but we most certainly can often have too lofty of thoughts concerning ourselves.

Beloved, let us be wary of losing the concept of the majesty of God, of the greatness of God, of the “awe”fulness of God. For the loss of such views of God is popular in the church today. We have surrendered our lofty concepts and substituted in their place views so low, so ignoble of God that they are utterly unworthy of thinking, worshipping people. We have not done this purposely, but little by little, because we have allowed ourselves the right to be dumbed down, we have lost our awareness that our thinking about God in our homes, in our work, in our schools, in our play time, indeed in most every arena of our lives, including our worship, is not fit for the glorious God of creation and of our salvation.

Possessing any kind of low view of God is the cause of all sorts of lesser evils in our lives. Churches are popping out all types of convoluted and unbiblical ways of thinking, all because of this one error. And as our view of God decreases, so too will our sense of His divine presence; the fervency and awe of our worship, and the effectiveness of our outreach to the lost. Our modern Christianity is producing “Christians” who have little appreciation for the experience of life in the Spirit; who hear words like that of the Psalmist, namely, “Be still and know that I am God” and are unmoved, being too self-confident, too busy and too unwilling to know God aright as based on this Book!

Beloved, we need to, as the Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy, “to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness;” to long for ever exalted views of our God; views that motivate us to live lives of Christlike character; to the glory of God; to the edification of the Body of Christ and for the evangelism of our family, friends and neighbors.

Our study in Colossians has been striving toward this end; namely an exalted view of Christ, of God in the flesh; to the end that our lives are increasing expressions of putting off the ways and thinking of the “old man” – of the sinful flesh; and the putting on of the new man, thinking and acting like Christ. But all of this begins with a right and high view of Christ.

And so, in our study of the book of Colossians, we have made some remarkable and exclusive assertions concerning Christ; assertions that can be summarized in two phrases:

- The absolute sufficiency of Jesus Christ as Savior
- The awesome supremacy of Jesus Christ as Lord.

You have heard these, but do you know them? Do you experience them? Both of these things are true of Jesus, His sufficiency as Savior and His supremacy as Lord because **“in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form...”** (Colossians 2:9). In other words, He is God, even as Colossians 1:15-19 so vividly reminds us:

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"... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything"(Colossians 1:18).

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him...

To put all this in the broadest sense, we are being challenged in the book of Colossians to develop a high view of God. And this challenge is an often repeated theme of Scripture. So, as we come off of our celebrations of Thanksgiving; and as we work our way back to the conclusion of our study in Colossians, I would like to bring to your attention once again; like we did several months back; why we have studied Colossians; that is to constantly consider if you are maintaining the highest views of God by maintaining the highest views of Christ. Ultimately what I wish to accomplish is two-fold; 1) to remind you from the Scriptures of our call and duty to have the highest view of God and; 2) remind of you some ways in which this is best accomplished.

Let us begin then by looking at Psalm 96:4-6 to establish in our minds this premise that we are to have not simply a high view of God, but indeed the highest view of Him.

4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. 6 Splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Clearly we are to see that ***God is supremely valuable and that He is most worthy of praise!*** We are told in these verses that God is the highest and most valuable being in existence! This is the only logical conclusion when we read that He "***made the heavens***". As the Creator of all things, God is infinitely greater than everything He created. This makes Him infinitely more valuable and glorious than everything He created. Now consider, since God is supremely valuable, what does it mean if we esteem other things higher than Him? Would it not make us fools and traitors. To not maintain a high view of God is to be guilty of the highest form of treason. It is the grossest failure to glorify the Glorious God. Using Biblical terminology, it is "idolatry." Why? Because God alone is not only worthy of our praise, but according to Psalm 96:4 He is to what? He is, "***greatly to be praised***".

Again, according to Psalm 96:5, what is any other god, or any other thing that preoccupies our hearts and minds to be regarded? As idols! And God hates the worship of anything other than that which is "most glorious," which is Himself. Turn with me to Romans 1:21-25 and consider with me what is described here as nothing but the rampant idolatry of the human heart:

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. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would

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*be dishonored among them. 25 **For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.***

What is the point we are to glean from these verses? The point is that God is to be valued, to be worship and to be greatly praised above every other thing. He is worthy of exaltation and worthy of praise. ***The reason we were created is to glorify, to exalt and to enjoy the majesty and glory of the Living God.*** No other activity or pursuit is either more of a duty for us or will be more fulfilling to us than this. To glorify God is the only pursuit that can truly fill or satisfy the void in the heart of man. This is the first and greatest commandment as well as God's goal in history – and specifically in your history – to be glorified in your life. We are to learn to worship Him more and more as Psalm 96:9 declares, ***“Worship the Lord in holy attire (or in the splendor of holiness); tremble before Him, all the earth.***

God alone is to be worshiped in the splendor of holiness, of majesty, of glory; which means to be viewed as higher than any other thing or person. God must be supreme in our affections, and the one to whom we ascribe the most value and worth. We are to worship God! Let us not forget that everything God does, everything is for this purpose, for the sake of His glory; for all to see His infinite splendor and worth. In His book, “Let the Nations be Glad”, John Piper asserts:

God is central and supreme in His own affections. There are no rivals for the supremacy of God's glory in His own heart. God is not an idolater. He does not disobey the first and great commandment. With all His heart and soul and strength and mind He delights in the glory of His manifold perfections. The most passionate heart for God in all the universe is God's heart.

When was the last time you consciously took note how replete the Scriptures are about God's passion for His glory? Turn with me to Isaiah 48:9-11 and consider with me the intensity of God Himself, when speaking of His passion for His glory. The context here is God's explanation of Israel's pending judgment for her idolatry, that is her low views of God.

9 For the sake of My name I delay My wrath, and for My praise I restrain it for you, In order not to cut you off. 10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. 11 For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another.

God will not give His glory to another and all people have been commanded by God to ***“give Him glory”*** and worship His holy name. The day is coming when the whole earth will be filled the knowledge of God's Glory! Hear Habakkuk 2:14

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Consider that each one of us will give an account to God for either our worship for His glory or our failure of such worship. As we read in Philipians 2:9-11:

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*9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that **at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

Let us be reminded of the just punishment that is inflicted upon those who do not worship and glorify God. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:7b-9 we read:

*when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, **away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,***

And according to Revelation 20:15, those whose names are not in the book of life, having not worshipped His glory will be **"thrown into the lake of fire."** Think about how this intensifies the very worth and greatness of God's glory. If the just punishment for not greatly praising God, for not living for Him, for not serving Him, in other words for idolatry is eternal punishment in hell, then does this not tell us just how great the glory of God is? We are fools not to see and seek the great value and worth of God!

Bethlehem Baptist Church, which is pastored by John Piper, makes this statement that does us well to consider:

The reality of hell is God's clear indictment of the infiniteness of our guilt. If our corruption were not deserving of an eternal punishment, God would be unjust to threaten us with a punishment so severe as eternal torment. But the Scriptures teach that God is just in condemning unbelievers to eternal hell (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; Matthew 5:29f; 10:28; 13:49f; 18:8f; 25:46; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10).

To put this in other words, to the extent that hell is a total and just sentence of condemnation for our sin and specifically living with low views of God, it is to this like extent that we must we think ourselves as totally blameworthy apart from the saving grace of God. What is the guard against such low views of God? We must be constant and vigilant to learn to esteem and value God and His glory above all things! **We are to give our hearts and minds to the constant consideration and contemplation of God, the fullness of our strength to the service of God, the entrusting of our souls to the care of God, and to the giving of our hearts to the love of God!** To God alone are we to give the chief of our affections and He is to be the priority in order of importance. Let us realize that to do anything less is foolishness and self-destruction!

Let us seek life from the source of life. Why do we spend so much time looking for fulfillment in any and every place other than in God? God is to be our passion, the central figure of our lives, our families, our marriages, and our church. To say this another way, we must be striving to be increasingly God-centered.

Have you ever heard this phrase said of someone who is self-absorbed, "He thinks the whole universe centers on him?" And yet, without being prideful, arrogant and conceited, God is

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truly the center of the universe. The whole universe truly revolves around God and His purposes, not our own. Is this no the truth of 1 Corinthians 10:31 which says,

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

Tell me, what is excluded in this verse? Nothing! But are there things in your life this morning that you might "not" be doing to the glory of God? What I would like to offer you this morning are some practical ways in which we might constantly cultivate the highest views of God. There are six of them, most of them you know, but the question is not do you know them, but rather are you doing them?

Six things we can do to develop a high view of God:

1. Treasure and esteem God and His Word above any and every other thing in your life. Let it become a consuming passion in your life to come to know God and see His glory through the testimony of the Word.

*Psalm 119:47-48: I shall **delight** [be utterly pleased and look upon] in Your commandments, **which I love**. And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, **which I love**; and I will meditate on Your statutes.*

Do you delight in God's commandments? Do you love them? Let us pray for such a delight in ourselves and in one another.

2. Commit to a daily time of undistracted meditation and contemplation in the Word of God. Only by this can our thoughts and intentions be rightly judged according to God.

*Psalm 1:1-2: How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But **his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.***

How is your bible reading? Are you hit and miss? Do you have a plan? Are you accountable to at least one other person about what you are reading? How can we have high views of God if we are not constantly reading and meditating upon what He has told us about Himself?

3. Be a doer of God's Word and merely a hearer. Are you "doing" what God's Word says? In Luke 11:28, our Lord Jesus said,

*"...blessed are those who hear the word of God **and observe it.**"*

As you read or hear the word of God, you must be diligent to ask yourself, "How can I put that verse, or that principle into practice?" When we read in Colossians 3:8 to put aside "anger" and in verse 12 "to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience,"

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do you just say in your heart, “Oh that would be good; that would be nice if I could do that; yes I need to do that!” Or do you begin to devise ways to actually do it, asking yourself, “who have I expressed anger toward; my spouse, my child, my friend, my Pastor” and then contemplate tangible ways in which to express to that person the virtues or verse 12. Let us be doers of the word!

4. Devote yourself to prayer with God. Pray intensely while reading the Word of God.

*Philippians 4:6-7: 6 Be anxious for nothing, **but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.** 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

And in Colossians 4:2 we read these words:

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving

Are you committed to prayer; are you alert and vibrant in your prayers? Do you thank God in your prayers?

5. Seek constant, regular, routine fellowship with people who have a high view of God and a passion for His glory.

*Acts 2:42: They were **continually devoting themselves** to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

1 Corinthians 15:33-34: 33 Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.” 34 Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

One of the constant struggles most ministries face this day is that of the busyness of the people. In our busy schedules filled with work, seminars, sports events, music lessons; seasonal activities and the like, more and more people find excuses not to be engaged and involved in as much of the fellowship as possible. For the vast majority of “believers” attending one service over the weekend constitutes fellowship with the believers while the rest of their week is subjected to countless exposures to godlessness. We must find ways in which to be continually devoting ourselves (corporately) to the things of God. As Hebrews 3:12-13 so aptly reminds us:

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

6. Never forget that God is Sovereign!

Our God is in control of the circumstances of our lives! Therefore we can be thankful in everything we have and never take for granted that God has overlooked our sins and allowed us

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to live, and continues to pour out His blessing on us. Do we not deserve much worse than we get! Therefore, we are called upon not to grumble or be disputing about our circumstances. Why? Because such attitudes are the equivalent to idolatry and blasphemes God's glory.

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: 16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 **in everything give thanks**; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Let us pray that we will have and maintain the highest view of God possible. Let us stimulate such thinking in one another; and let such thinking manifest itself in how we love one another and in how we communicate to others the greatness of our God!

Soli Deo Gloria

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