

What do you think of God?

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

This morning, I would like to break from our study in the book of Acts and have you revisit with me a message that is not only a repeated theme of our church and our ministries, but is also an essential exhortation and one of the greatest needs we must hear and heed in our walk with Jesus Christ. It is so incredibly easy to know in our heads what is right; but until we reminded of it and challenged to ask ourselves if what we know in our heads is actually being lived through our hearts and then out through our hands we may be quietly and subtly deluding ourselves, missing the greatness of the blessing of God as well as missing opportunities to be extraordinary blessings to others concerning the grace of God. And let us face it, who likes to miss out on good things? If you recall our study of the book of Colossians some time back now, we made two most remarkable and exclusive assertions, facts that when rightly and regularly considered, will affect everything we say and everything we do. What are these two assertions?

- **The absolute sufficiency of Jesus Christ as Savior –**

This means that Jesus alone saves and He alone saves completely. Jesus planned it all and paid it all and so we must remember this glorious fact as found in Jonah 2:9, that ***"salvation is from the Lord."*** He saves His people. Have you experienced the sole sufficiency of Jesus as your Savior?

- **The awesome supremacy of Jesus Christ as Lord.**

This means that there is not one higher than Jesus; there is no one greater than Jesus. He is the boss; the captain, the head, the leader, the commander, the master to whom we ought to delightfully and willingly bow the knee and pledging to Him our lives, our possessions, our hearts and our minds.

Both of these assertions are true of Jesus because ***"in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form..."*** (Colossians 2:9). In other words, we affirm that Jesus is God, even as Colossians 1:15-19 so vividly reminds us:

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, the book of Colossians, as well as the entire testimony of Scripture, challenges us to have the highest view of God by having an increasingly high view of Jesus. This morning then, I wish to accomplish a couple of things;

- 1) to remind you from the Scriptures of our call and duty to have the highest view of God and of Jesus and;
- 2) remind of you some ways in which this first point is best accomplished.

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

May we never grow weary of hearing that profound statement of A.W. Tozer who said, *"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."* When we find ourselves thinking about God, particularly outside the times of worship with His people, what comes to your mind? Duty, delight? Fear, peace?

What do you think about God? What comes into your mind as you contemplate the Holy One? Let us note how Scripture addresses this question by looking first at Psalm 96:4-6. Here we must establish in our minds this premise that we are not to have simply a high view of God, but indeed the highest view of Him that then affects all that we think and do.

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 Himself ***"made the heavens"***. As we read in Colossians 1, Jesus is this one who ***"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 as higher as or more important than Him? And the knowledge of Him? And of a regular experience of Him? To have things in our lives that whether by profession or by practice are demonstrably more important to us makes us fools at least and traitors at worst. To not have and maintain a high view of God is to be guilty of the highest form of treason. It is the grossest failure not to glorify the Glorious God. Using Biblical terminology, it is "idolatry" in its most devious form. Why? Because God alone is not only worthy of our praise, but according to Psalm 96:4 He is not only to be praised, He is not only to shine forth in and through our lives and actions, but notice also He is, ***"greatly to be praised"***. A reminder that the word "praise" means to make a lot of racket or noise in joyful celebration. It means to make known and proclaim aloud the attributes or characteristics or works of something or someone and in this context that someone is God.

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. Forgive me as I go on a rant; actually the Lord's rant as He pummeled the people with this very truth of His supremacy, reminding us of something we can forget; that He alone is God; there is no one and nothing that compares to Him. He the Lord's own testimony from Isaiah:

Isaiah 43:11

I, even I, am the Lord, And there is no savior besides Me.

Isaiah 44:6

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.

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Isaiah 44:8

Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.

Isaiah 45:5-6

I am the Lord, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other,

Isaiah 45:21-22

Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.

That my friends is the absolutely sufficient Savior and the awesomely supreme Lord. And why, why did the Lord get so intense about this truth. Because without such reminders our hearts will revert to idol worship. Consider the rampant idolatry of the human heart:

Romans 1:21-25

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 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.

The point, God is to be valued, worship and greatly praised above every other thing. He is worthy of our exaltation; worthy of our consideration; worthy of our contemplation; worthy of our proclamation. He is worthy of our time; worthy of our energies and worthy of our lives. ***The reason we were created is to glorify, exalt and 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. Are you downhearted? Look to God and glorify Him now! Are you empty? Look to God and glorify Him now! Are you lonely? Look to God and glorify Him now! Are you confused? Look to God and glorify Him now! Are you depressed? Look to God and glorify Him now! Are you wondering if God can use you? Look to God and glorify Him now! This is 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 [or in accordance with] of holiness); tremble before Him, all the earth.***

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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! ***For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.***

Let us not forget that everything God does, everything is for this purpose, for the sake of His glory; for all, your spouse, your children, your family, your friends, your co-workers, your neighbors, those whom you pass in the shopping center, for all to see His infinite splendor and worth. This is why you were created; and this is why you were saved. 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.

Lord God, let us have Your heart! When was the last time you consciously took note how replete the Scriptures are about God's passion for His own glory? Consider Isaiah 48:9-11 which declares:

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 mankind has 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 of His glory or our failure of such worship. As we read in Philippians 2:9-11:

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.

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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 intentionally and relentlessly, for not serving Him, in other words "for idolatry and treason" 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 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; intentional and relentless 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; the firstfruits of our love. He is to be the priority in order of importance. Let us realize that to do anything less is foolishness and self-destruction; it is idolatry and treason against the most glorious God!

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; God-focused; and nothing else than God-consumed.

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 truly the center of the universe. The whole universe revolves around God and His purposes, not our own. Is this not 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.

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Tell me, what is excluded in this verse? Nothing! But tell some things that you might do that are "not" to the glory of God? If we are not careful, we could do most everything "not" to the glory of God.

Well, let me close our time by looking at six simple things we can and should be doing to cultivate a high view of God and of Jesus Christ. I wish we had more time to unpack these, but use them as a starting place for your growing in a higher view of God. Most of these 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** 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.*

2. Commit to a daily time of undistracted meditation and contemplation in the Word of God. Take one word, or one phrase and mull it over and over until you can regurgitate it back to someone else demonstrating that you get it. 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.***

3. Be a doer of God's Word and merely a hearer. Are you "doing" what God's Word says? Are you actually treasuring God's Word? Are you actually meditating on God's Word?

*Luke 11:28: "...blessed are those who hear the word of God **and observe it.**"*

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.*

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5. Seek constant, regular, routine fellowship with people who have a high view of God and a passion for His glory. It is not that we are to separate ourselves from unbelievers, for we are the salt and light of the world; but you will quickly lose your flavor and your light will grow dim apart from surrounding yourself with those who have an equal or even greater passion than your own.

*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.

6. Never forget that God is Sovereign! He 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 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 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.*

Oh God, give us a passion for Your glory! Let us and guides into knowing You and then in proclaiming You we ask in Jesus Name, Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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