
Give thanks in all circumstances

Part Two: Psalm 19

Introduction

My desire for you this Thanksgiving season is that your gratitude to God be very deep, very authentic and very joyful. And that this gratitude to God will not be dependent upon circumstances. Rather, you will find yourself humbled by His grace, gladdened by His glory and grateful for His provisions.

Last week we began a two-part series titled *Give Thanks in all Circumstances*. We began the probe how we ought to carry out the seemingly impossible command *give thanks in all circumstances*. Through this series we are aiming at identifying interference to *giving thanks in all circumstances*. Through these two messages we are asking the LORD to give us ability to look at thanksgiving impediments; attitudes of the heart that would check and hold us back from giving thanks to the Lord.

Thanksgiving Impediments

Entitled to His grace

Our first message taken from Matthew 20:1-16 exposed one reason why we may be so irregular in our giving thanks and so dependent upon circumstances. We called it an entitlement mentality. We saw in this passage that an entitlement mentality...

- ❖ Says that God needs me.
- ❖ Believes that I earn His favor.
- ❖ Demonstrates a self-focused, self-reliant, prideful unbelief
- ❖ Left unrepentant leads to His wrath

Exchanging His glory

Today we aim to expose another hindrance to giving thanks in all circumstances. I saw this hindrance in a place I had not seen before. On the screen you should see Romans 1:20-25. Notice the Apostle Paul's reasoning and why these people are not giving thanks.

“For His invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him but... exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images... they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worship and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever.” (Romans 1:20-25)

These verses tell us just how critical our topic is for today. According to this paragraph, why is it that people do not honor / glorify God or give thanks to Him? The text says that

“they exchanged the glory of God for images”. Instead of cherishing the glory of God we have exchanged the glory of God for something else: for images of his glory like...

well marriages, well-behaved children, well-organized homes, good weather, good vacations, good food, good health, fast computers, fast cars, fast athletes, impressive paintings, impressive views, impressive clothes...or whatever makes our hearts pound more than the wonder of the glory of God.

Underneath ingratitude is a great problem. This great problem of all time and in every culture concerns what humans are making of the glory of God. The fundamental problem we face this morning is not merely that we don't give thanks in all circumstances. It is that we do not make much of the greatest value in the Universe. And exchanging the glory of God for God-replacing treasures is mutiny.

This morning's message is aimed at making clear His glory. But it is more than this. Its purpose is to so expose God's beauty that our hearts will want nothing but Him. And that sin will become undesirable. And that we will turn from substitutions to the Savior. And that we will repent of falling for the grand lie that life is found in creation. And that we will turn to the beauty and glory of the Creator for all we need. Psalm 19 was written and preserved for people like you and me to recognize and relish the splendor of His worth. We notice this as we take note that *God reveals His glory from the stars above to the Scriptures in hand to the soul unseen.*

From the stars

(Vv.1-6)

Let's begin with the first six verses. In these opening verses we have a striking presentation of the truth that *God reveals His Glory from the stars.* He has built into his creation a demonstration of his deity and might that call forth praise and thanks to his name. We witness this glory as we observe how he reveals it in his world as the Creator.

As the Creator

(Vv.1-2)

Did you know that the galaxy in which we live has approximately 2-400 billion stars in it and is some 150,000 light-years in diameter? And did you know that one light year equals 6 trillion miles. In 1999 the Hubble Space Telescope estimated that there were 125 billion galaxies in the universe. In the midst of the staggering sheer size of space and the vast number of stars we are meant to be overwhelmed not by His works but by Him.

Verse one begins the poem in a symmetry and beauty known as synonymous parallelism. “The heavens” correspond to “the sky above”. “declare” parallels “proclaims”. And “the glory of God” matches up with “his handiwork”. The verbs in this verse are a progressive tense. That is, they describe ongoing action. Each sunrise, each twinkle of a star, each cloud formation speak afresh of the glory of God.

In verse 2 we notice a continuing development of the nature of God's communication of Himself in His creation. Day to day pours out speech. “Pours forth” or “bubbles over” describes fluid that cannot be contained by its container. As a boiling pot bub-

bles over so one day cannot contain its news to itself. By nature, it has to overflow into the next day. Like a relay race in which the runner runs so far and then gives the baton to the next runner is God's creation with God's message. And the message is God is glorious! God is glorious! God is glorious! Creation echoes the never-ending succession of the awesome news that God is glorious!

Not only do these two verses show God's might and glory each and every day. It also presents a marvelous perspective on the Creator. All His creation is his "handiwork". Creation comes from His hand. He made it not like a painter paints using things already exist. God's handiwork came out of nothing. Psalm 8 calls this "the work of His finger". 125 billion galaxies, trillions and trillions and trillions and trillions of miles of space...is simply child's play for Him.

Apart from speech

(V.3)

Verse 3 continues to shape our understanding of the nature of God's revelation of his glory in creation. Notice that there is a limitation to this revelation. And that limitation spoken of in v.3 is that it is apart from speech. It literally reads, "no speech nor language...their voice is not heard (see KJV on this verse). The point is that this revealing of His glory is a non-verbal revelation.

To the end of the world

(v.4a-b)

And this mute message has traveled a distance as seen in v.4. To the end of the world God reveals His glory through this speechless speech. This is what Paul picked up in Rom.1:20f to say that all are without excuse; for the wordless word of God's revelation of His glory goes to the ends of the world.

With awesome beauty

(Vv.4c-6)

And it goes with arresting power and beauty as noticed in vv.4-6. David, using eye-catching word pictures, wants his readers to recognize the power and beauty of the Lord's glory in creation.

As a bridegroom & an athlete

This section could only have been written away from malls and high rises and central air. Walking the Jericho road in heat of over 110 degrees and organizing life around the sun one does not have to wonder why David talks this way. As a bridegroom the sun though 93 million miles from David is strong, healthy, robust. There is no hesitation in the sun's circuit each and every day. It knows where its going. And with power and pleasure it pursues its path. Likewise with an athlete, God's glory in creation is seen in energy and joy. The sun look victorious; always. What do these metaphors carry to their readers in relation to God's glory? Ponder this regularly beloved. Think upon His glory as seen in His handiwork.

To the Scriptures in hand

(Vv.7-10)

What a mighty and glorious God he must be! He puts his power and glory on display in order to be marveled at. But his nonverbal communication is not enough. We need his words. And that is where we find the psalmist going. In vv.7-10, we see that God reveals his glory from the stars now to the Scriptures in hand. From His works to His Word God reveals his glory. We see this beauty in what the word is and in what it does.

What it is

I believe that it is the teaching of the movement of this psalm that God reveals His glory more fully in His Word than in all creation. The words of God sketch out the character of God.

The Name Yahweh

These descriptions of the Bible are not meant to be sliced and squeezed to extract every drop of juice. One could study them independent of each other with some profit. But they are meant to be read together so that we get the cumulative impression. They are a stereophonic six speaker wrap-around designed to hear the awesome music of the Word! So let me point out but a few notes from this sheet of music.

Notice the repetition of the name *Yahweh* (that is “LORD”). All that the Word is points to the LORD. This six-fold use of His Name is to be contrasted with the one time use of the term “God” in v.1. In creation He reveals His power and wisdom and glory. In the Word he reveals Himself. We should never have known of God and His Son and of His Spirit and of His salvation and of heaven and hope and of joy if He had not SPOKEN.

The synonyms

The second note to this music is the synonyms David uses. These words all speak about the Scriptures but each with its specific slant.

The law

Pointing to the road to life. It is the instructions of the Lord.

The testimony

Pointing to the self-authenticating revelation of God. It is the confirmation of His character.

The precepts

Pointing to the directions to the destination. It is the roadmap of His purity.

The commandment

Pointing to His authority. It is His sole right to speak over our lives.

The fear

Pointing to results. It is the proper effect the Scriptures are to have on us.

The rules

Pointing to discernment. It is the arbitration in the affairs of our lives.

The quality

The last note I desire to strike in this sheet of music has to do with quality. The words perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true and righteous altogether all correspond to the quality of Scripture. They are piled upon each other to highlight the integrity and purity and trustworthiness of the character of the Scriptures. All of these qualities and contours give us insight into the Living Word; Jesus Christ Himself. Free from blemish and utterly reliable and desirable is the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Heb.1:1ff; Jn.1:1ff; 5:39; et. al.).

What it does

If that is what the Word is and this Word is a silhouette of Jesus, what does it do? What effects does it have on the believer of the Word? The Scriptures are never to be on the coffee table only. They ought not to be found on our bookshelves much. The Word when believed powerfully shapes the soul. These affects are:

Reviving the soul

Making wise the simple

Rejoicing the heart

Enlightening the eye

Enduring forever

Satisfying altogether

When reading the Bible as though we are in love with the Author of the Bible and Creator of the Universe our souls are revived more than a trip to Myrtle Beach. When we meditate on the Word rightly our minds are made clear more than they would be on a yacht sailing the Pacific Ocean. When studied properly the Scriptures make our hearts happy far more than camping in the Smokey's. When we scour the Bible for Jesus we become satisfied more than a guided tour of the Grand Canyon.

Here's the point: When we understand; and I mean genuinely know the Creator through Jesus, we can validly enjoy creation. We will not exchange the glory of God for the creation or creature. We will not embrace and be embraced by idolatry. We will be worshippers of our glorious God and not worshippers of His creation! We will honor Him as God and give thanks to Him always.

To the soul unseen

(Vv.11-14)

We are now ready for the third and final movement in this psalm. How are we going to respond this day to this glory? Will we be people who honor Him as God and give thanks to Him in all circumstances?

Notice how David responds.

Revels in Scripture

He revels (cf. vv. 10-11). He celebrates not in the stars but in the Scriptures. From all the beauty that is around David, he chooses the Scriptures to be the object of his amazement. It is from the Bible that we find warnings and rewards. It is not found from the sun. Though the sun shines throughout the world and pierces into hidden places, the Word shines forth ever so more piercing into the hidden places of the soul.

When God reveals His glory from the stars above to the Scriptures in hand the test to determine whether we are seeing this glory or not is found in what we revel over. Do we celebrate over and take great satisfaction in the glory of creation & creatures? Or do we celebrate over and take great satisfaction in the glory of God seen in Scripture? David sees God's glory in the Bible. He sees so much of the purity of the Word that he sees something else. And that something is his sin.

When glory is seen we revel over it but also recoil from our sin. We see this in how David ends his psalm.

Recoils from sin

Prayer

David, in light of the perfections seen and felt in the Word, becomes concerned with his own sins. He sees two types of sin. And so, he cries out for grace in relation to these sins (as seen in the word "also" in v.13).

Hidden faults

He talks about declaring him innocent from *hidden faults*. David, like all of us, was totally depraved. He was sinful whether or not he was expressing his full sin. Undetected sin may not have the same consequences of the other type of sin. But it nevertheless is sin. Thoughts and motives unexposed and unnoticed which run contrary to the holiness of God are still sinful. When David saw afresh God's glory he knew he had a multitude of hidden sin. And so, he cries out for acquittal. "Declare me innocent" was his response to God's glory. Not unlike Peter's response to Jesus when he caught a glimpse that Jesus was not a mere man. His divinity seen unraveled Peter (Lk.5:8).

Perhaps you are here today and have seen a glimpse of God's glory which causes you stress. You do not have your sins forgiven. You see the splendor and might of the Creator. You witness His character as being pure and perfect. You need full and forever forgiveness; for you know you have hidden sins. Do what David did. Recoil from your sin by calling out to the Lord for his declaration of innocence. This declaration is found only in Jesus. Turn to

Jesus. Bank you hope on Him and his righteousness. Look to the cross. See your penalty for your sins paid in full on the cross. The cross is the only place in which you will hear the declaration of forgiveness and acquittal.

Presumptuous sins

In v.13 we see another kind of sin. He calls it presumptuous sins. We find this category of sin in Num.15:30. Bold and bigheaded are ways these sins are carried out. The high hand of rebellion is what David is talking about in v.13. Notice how he responds to the glory revealed in this verse. "Let them not have dominion over me". He cries once more to the glorious God of the Scriptures for freedom. He knows of no other place to which he can flee for hope. Though God is in another class altogether; holy & majestic, David unraveled over his sin goes to the glorious God for mercy. And mercy he found (cf. Ps.51). He found not merely the pardon for sin. He found the power of grace necessary to live free from the power and control of sin. He found what he was looking for; reconciliation with the glorious God of the Universe!

Outcome

When he saw God's revealed glory both in the stars and in the Scripture, he needed mercy and grace. He prays. And he prays for two things; a declaration of innocence and a restraint from his known and powerful sins. He received both. Notice the outcome of this answered prayer.

When declared innocent from hidden sins and restrained from presumptuous sins David shall be blameless. He will not be guilty of the great transgression. And it is this outcome that brings the psalm to a close and to its main application. The great transgression to which he refers is idolatry; desiring something not for God's glory or in such a way that we lose our contentment in God (cf. Col.3:5). (Note: This Hebrew phrase "the great transgression" is found in other passages where idolatry is the topic; see Ex.32:21,30,31; 2Kings 17:21 for a sample.). Paul picks up on this and writes his commentary of Psalm 19 in his letter to the Romans. He says that the great lie or transgression is to see the glory of God and then prefer the creation or the creatures.

What David is doing here is something all of us need to do. To behold the glory of God is to become like the glory of God. Beholding empowers repentance of this sort. It keeps us away from desiring something not for God's glory.

David ends with a sweet prayer. He longs to be pleasing to the Lord from inside out. Those whose hearts are gripped by His glory seek to please Him.

If we are ever to learn to honor God and to be thankful to Him it will be because we have learned of Him through His word and then learned how to delight in Him through all that He has made.

Conclusion

The battle over our affections comes down to two glories. Which one is winning over your soul? Are you enamored with creation? with creatures? Or has His beauty capti-

vated your heart? What ought you to do if you see your soul being charmed by something less than God. What must you do this hour if you have seen a measure of glory and find your heart loosing contentment in His glory and hunting elsewhere for your satisfaction? How are you to honor God and give thanks to Him?

1. Check to see whether you are in the faith.
2. Identify your object of love.
3. Get help.
4. Find biblical repentance as your solution.
5. Set your sights on the splendor of His glory and give thanks in all circumstances.