

PHILIPPIANS BIBLE STUDY

Philippians 1:1-11

Lesson #3(c)

Introduction:

Recap last lesson and lay foundation for this weeks verses. Establish the context clearly.
Open with prayer and then read verses 1 - 11

*11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, **to the glory and praise of God.***

Phil 1:11 (NASB)

A. To the Glory and Praise of God (From Jesus Christ)

First and foremost above all other things that the bible teaches humanity, and it teaches more than we can ever even comprehend, is that **God is a God of glory.** In every book, and in every chapter, and dare I say in every verse of the holy scriptures, God's glory is being displayed, in one aspect or another, to all creation. Sometimes in His unimaginable power, sometimes in His infinite wisdom, sometimes in His eternal self-existent nature, and always in His perfect holiness and righteousness.

The scriptures reveal to us every aspect of the glory of God that He wants us to understand in this life. Though I am certain there is even more, much more, to His glory that we aren't able to comprehend or even stand while abiding in these earthly bodies, but will be able and allowed to behold when He calls us to be with Him in His presence.

To rightly understand the glory of God, one must be able and willing to see every extreme of the nature and character of God. It has been said that no one can ever possibly understand, and adequately appreciate the compassion of God unless they thoroughly understand the wrath of God. It is the clear understanding of the wrath of God, and the utterly hopeless predicament of humanity, that provides the essential backdrop for the understanding of the magnitude of the compassionate loving mercy of God. Mercy only exists, or applies where something else is rightly applicable. Otherwise it isn't mercy at all, it's just justice.

It is only when mankind clearly sees, and comes to terms with just how sinful and disobedient that he is, and how incredibly angry that makes God, and the inconceivable extent of God's wrath on those who anger Him, that mankind may begin to get a tiny glimpse of the infinite mercy of God that temporarily holds His wrath in abeyance, waiting for that predetermined day of wrath that He has set by His own sovereign will. Make no mistake, He will have His day of wrath, and everyone who has ignored and denied Him will come to see and experience first hand, one extremity of the infinite glory of God, His glorious wrath. And who can stand in that day asks the prophets:

6 Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger?

His wrath is poured out like fire And the rocks are broken up by Him.

(Na 1:6)

2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.

(Mal 3:2)

Although it isn't unique to our time, nevertheless we live in a time where the wrath of God is literally not considered mentionable. We must only speak of the mercy, and forgiveness, and endless loving tolerance of God toward all humanity. And because of this we fit perfectly into the description of Romans chapter three starting at verse 10 that gives a scathing assessment of mankind from God's perspective, and sums it all up with the statement in verse 18 that *"there is no fear of God before their eyes."* It would appear that we, as humanity, have completely banned any acknowledgment or discussion of the glory of God as demonstrated by His fierce wrath against His enemies. It's even considered honorable and desirable not to speak of such things by some very famous contemporary preachers.

In a former church where I taught bible studies there was a nice lady who, every time the topic came to the wrath or judgement of God quickly interrupted and said she knew that the bible spoke of these things, but she herself

preferred to only speak of the love of God and never His anger or wrath. Now why would someone who knows that the scriptures teach something choose to deliberately ignore it? Wouldn't that be very dangerous, to deliberately ignore any portions of the holy scriptures? Of course it would, and everyone who truly knows God intimately would never even consider such folly. But many who claim the name of Christian do so on the understanding of a whole different god than the one presented in the scriptures. One that is only tolerant and forgiving, not in any way judgmental or wrathful. A totally non-threatening god of infinite forbearance toward all mankind, or at least toward those who say they believe in him.

And here we begin to see the danger of basing our conclusions on half truths. Half truths are exactly that, they are half true and half false. Would we intentionally eat food that is half good and half poison? And yet so many are content to base their eternal hope on a god that they intentionally only know in half measure.

A knowledge of the glory of God is essential to acceptable worship, because worship must be presented in spirit and in truth. That truth encompasses an understanding of the very nature and righteousness of God as well as an understanding of the love of God. At best a half knowledge of God can produce a half worship of God. Emotion, no matter how genuine, is not a substitute for truth. To give glory to God absolutely requires a true knowledge of the God to whom we offer that glory. There is no such thing as blind worship or blind glory to an unknown god, as Paul told the Greeks in his sermon on Mars Hill. (Ac 17:23)

Now I can hear you asking, Bob aren't we supposed to be discussing the glory of God? My answer is, Yes we are indeed, but the whole point I'm trying to show is that we can't even begin to discuss the glory of a God who we aren't even willing to know in every aspect of His infinite attributes. How do we have a serious and honest discussion of His glory if we intentionally prohibit any consideration of a whole half of His very nature? We must be both willing and able to accept all that God is, in every aspect of His majestic being to even commence a discussion on the topic of His glory. And this is what I'm trying to do by this discussion. I am trying to clear the path, if you will, so that we may have a true and meaningful discussion of God's glory. Because there is, and has long been, a very distinct movement within the church itself to intentionally suppress much of the glory of God under the banner of love and forgiveness. Some of this not malicious but is done with good, though flawed intentions. Some however is done from self defense, to justify licentious behaviors and half hearted life styles. But either way it is a serious assault on the glory of God.

Furthermore, it is a two fold injustice. First it is injustice to the righteous glory of God, who demonstrates His omnipotence and sovereignty through His utter destruction of all His enemies, and second it is injustice to mankind, in that it removes the essential comparative background that is absolutely necessary to rightly understand and duly appreciate the enormity of the glory of His loving compassion.

We do neither God nor man a favor by ignoring, or deliberately down playing, the incredible wrath and pending judgement of God. God's glorious attributes are only rightly understood by the infinite enormity of their extremes. Removing, or even diminishing one extreme affects the ability to perceive and appreciate the value of the other. What defines God's glory is the infinite extremities of His attributes. Damage to one will inevitably damage all, as each is measured by its comparative relation to the other.

How would we know that light exists if there were no darkness? How would we know good exists if there were no evil. How would we know forgiveness if there were no offenses to forgive? How would mankind ever know the boundless loving mercy of God if He hadn't shown us first His terrifying righteous wrath against sin and evil?

It is a grievous mistake to deliberately ignore the wrath of God and simply speak endlessly of His love and mercy, as these can only be appreciated by the stark contrast to His wrath. Remember what Jesus told that Pharisee in his question about forgiveness recorded in Luke 7:47. He said that only those who were forgiven much would love much. In other words, if we don't see ourselves as being in serious jeopardy then we aren't particularly grateful for the rescue.

For an example, if you have your hands full of groceries and someone helps you open the door you are grateful for his assistance, but if you are trapped in a burning building behind a locked door and a fireman breaks open that door and pulls you out in just the nick of time, you are a whole other kind of grateful. It is the contextual circumstances that establish the relative value of everything. And so it is with the glory of God.

We will not, and cannot, ever adequately and passionately appreciate the boundless mercy of God, if we continue to deliberately ignore the extreme burning wrath of God. It is only when compared one to the other that both find their meaning in the minds and understanding of mankind. We must know the fear of God if we are to ever comprehend the depth of the love of God. Neither one can find its truest definition without the other.

The very shallow perception of the enormity of the gift of saving faith, by the unmerited grace of God, has been brought down in value to little more than another stimulating human experience. If mankind understood the true predicament of his situation; that he is at all times but one breath, one heartbeat, from and eternal and inescapable lake of burning hell fire, and his one and only possible means of rescue was by a merciful God who is rightfully enraged with his behaviors, and thoroughly ready to let him plunge into that burning lake at any second, THEN maybe he would begin to comprehend the enormity of the value of the mercy of God.

The whole concept of the mercy of God today is getting a new car, or a better job, or a happier life. And this can be traced directly back to the deliberate and intentional down playing of the fierce wrath of God by perhaps well meaning, but seriously mistaken preachers and teachers. I said before and I'll say again, no one is doing you a favor by deliberately avoiding the clear teaching of the fierce, unescapable, unavoidable, unbearable, wrath of almighty God. Some very wise men once wrote "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Ps 111:10; Pr 9:10)

There are surely many things that seriously need to be recovered regarding the beliefs and affections of the contemporary church, but few if any are more important than a return to preaching the full scope of the Glory of God, including every extreme of His nature and Holiness, both His infinite mercy and His infinite wrath, or mankind will continue to put very little value on His mercy and never come anywhere near comprehending the boundaries of His infinite glory.

B. To the Glory of God the Father

I would love to do an exhaustive study of the biblical examples of the word glory. In a word search I got 359 hits on that word in the new and old Testaments. Not all of them of course are referring to the glory of God, but the vast majority are, and the rest get their definition from their comparison to it. Glory is literally defined by the nature of God himself. There is really nothing else in all creation that is truly glorious by comparison. The whole of the recorded scriptures could rightly be ascribed to the revelation of the glory of God. They are a glimpse of the essence of God himself, and it is the scriptures that allow us humans to be introduced to the glory of the almighty omnipotent God of all creation.

Jesus himself is our classic example of the glorification of God the Father. Absolutely everything whatsoever that ever comes from Jesus Christ is always **to the glory of God the Father**. Jesus does not even glorify Himself, His Father glorifies Him.

Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; **it is My Father who glorifies Me**, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; (Jn 8:54)

"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (Jn 17:5)

Glory is a word that is intended to be solely applicable to God. He does not share His glory with any other would be deities, nor does He share His place as supreme being with any other. He alone is worthy of glory and honor and worship and praise, because He has created everything that exists in the universe, and sustains it moment by moment with His power, through His son Jesus Christ. (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16-17)

3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

John 1:3 (NASB)

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. Col 1:15-17 (NASB)

In fact, it could be argued from scriptures that among the highest priorities of God in His entire creation plan, was His own glorification by creatures that were uniquely made and carefully prepared to know, understand, appreciate, and ultimately love Him for all that He is in His divine and glorious nature and holiness.

For humanity to know and appreciate the glory of God might be at the central core of God's motivation for the entire creation plan. His desire was always, from Genesis chapter two, to have a suitable companion, and by suitable He means one who is created in His likeness enough to be able to comprehend and appreciate His incomprehensible glory.

From the very beginning God made His intentions and desires clear to man regarding His glory.

Next week we will examine this theme in more detail

Closing Prayer.

Narrow Gate Baptist Church
Robert Andrews, Pastor