

The Glory of God Secured in Christ

Isaiah 9: 6; Judges 13: 18, 22; Luke 4: 22; Luke 8 : 25; Luke 9: 43, 44; Luke 11: 14; Luke 24: 38-45.

F. A. Hughes.

AUG. 1962

I want to refer very simply to the glory of the Person of Christ, a theme which is very dear to all our hearts. It is a theme which I am assured becomes dearer to us as we grow older, and yet is dear and precious to the youngest lover of Christ. One's desire is that we may each have an increased appreciation of the preciousness of Christ.

Some seven times or so the thought of men glorifying God is brought before us in Luke, and if we study the passages we see prominence given to the greatness of Christ. What is more, it would be observed that, in general, the ascription of glory to God is secured in circumstances marked by weakness so far as man is concerned. It would seem from these Scriptures, that there is a moral triumph for God in that He secures glory to Himself in the most unexpected conditions.

It is unnecessary to remind the brethren that at the moment when the sin of man seemed to dominate the scene at the cross, it was there that God so blessedly glorified Himself in the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the very outset when sin came in and seemed to spoil the whole creation for God, it was then that God spoke of the "seed of the woman." And in relation to the seed of the woman, that scene marked by failure and breakdown and the apparent triumph of the devil is to be removed and the whole earth filled with the glory of God.

As we take account of the breakdown in the professing church around us, of which, alas, we form part, and as we come to that which answers to Laodicean conditions, conditions of extreme weakness and failure, we again see the glory of Christ shining in a most blessed way. He speaks of Himself as the One "who overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne," Rev. 3: 21. What an encouragement to us in a day of breakdown to see the glory of One who in Manhood here overcame everything that would challenge the glory of God, and as having done it completely and gloriously, He has sat down with His Father on His throne.

In the history of the people of God in Numbers we see how God answered their murmurings time after time. Each time they murmured, God answered it with the manifesting of His glory; the people murmured, and the glory of God appeared. And as we take account of the murmuring and the breakdown, and the sorrow, and the failure around us today, we may be assured that God has the answer in Christ to it all. Let us keep our eyes upon that blessed One, He who overcame, and the One who alone can help each one of us to overcome. It is as having our eyes and our affections set upon Himself, that we shall see the shining of the glory of God.

There is a moment coming when the uncreated glory of Christ will shine throughout the scene, the glory will be that of God and of the Lamb. That is the ultimate that God has in mind in relation to *this world*, that there is to be a scene filled with His glory radiating from the Person of Christ.

If you go through Luke's gospel you will find that there were those who glorified God whilst in the weakest of conditions. Could we think of any position more removed from ecclesiastical greatness than that of a few shepherds sitting in a field by night, keeping their sheep. No church dignitary with them, no one to teach them ecclesiastical phrases, but from those shepherds there issued a song of glory and praise to God. They were but ordinary folk as we are, but their hearts had been affected by the

angelic message in relation to the greatness of Christ, "Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 11). They are moved towards that glorious Person in response to the message, and their hearts were so filled with what they saw in Him, that they returned "glorifying and praising God."

In chapter 4 the Lord goes to Nazareth, a place so despised that it could be asked, "Can there *any* good thing come out of Nazareth?" John 1: 46. What poverty of thought! There in Nazareth "where He had been brought up" the Lord Jesus went into the synagogue and preached. Perhaps that is one of the hardest places in which to preach — where we have been brought up! To our neighbours, to those with whom we work day by day, to those who know us intimately. It was in such circumstances, where He was known, that "all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth," (Luke 4: 22). What an answer to the challenge, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Gracious words" sprang from the lips of Christ in Nazareth; in that lowly despised place He brought to men words which revealed to those who would hear the compassion of the heart of God, and the glory of His grace. What infinite glory has accrued to the blessed God as a consequence of those communications which have reached men in the Person of Christ.

Then we have the case of the palsied man. What weakness we see there! Four men carried him, making five in all, a symbol of human weakness. And as coming into living contact by faith with the compassion and the greatness of the One who was there, the weakness and helplessness of the position is removed, and the man "departed to his own house, glorifying God, and they were all amazed, and they glorified God."

In Luke 17 it was the Samaritan who "returned to give glory to God." As coming under the healing touch of Christ, there comes from this *stranger* a tribute of praise and glory to the blessed God. The Lord's words are full of deep feeling "there are not found that returned to give glory to God, *save this stranger*".

And finally we reach the scene of Calvary. We are reminded that it is in relation to the cross that the *weakness* of Christ is referred to, "He was crucified through weakness," (2 Cor. 13: 4). There we see that blessed Man suffering, dying on Calvary's cross in order that the mighty strength of the glorious thoughts of God might be revealed to you and to me. The centurion saw Him there. Would we have thought that a centurion of the Roman Empire would be one who would express his sense of the glory of God? But so it is. Such is the greatness of His work, such is the preciousness of the Person of Christ, that from the most unexpected quarters there issues through him glory to God.

Now let us bring the matter home to ourselves. One is conscious of being the most unlikely person from whom there could be anything expected for the glory of God. Born in sin, "shapen in iniquity," how we have loved to go our own ways; but God came in in the sovereignty of mercy. In whom did He show us that mercy? "Whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood," Romans 3: 25 (N.T.). In the Person of Christ, the sovereign mercy of God has shone out in all its glory, and here we are "Vessels of mercy . . . prepared unto glory," Romans 9: 23. Thus from the most unlikely persons there comes today, in the power of the Spirit, a tribute of praise and of glory to the blessed God. Let us adore Him; let us praise His Holy Name for the way in which in all our weakness and helplessness He has moved to us in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His name is "Wonderful," indeed it is, and He has done wonderful things. I understand that this word "wonderful" in Luke's gospel is practically the same word as that used in Isaiah 9. What He has done is in accord with what He is in the glory of His Person. His actions, His words bespeak who He is. Is there not the evidence in each one of us that what He does is wonderful?

Manoah having heard that the name of God was Wonderful, said, "We shall surely die," Judges

13: 22. In our day we also have seen that His name is Wonderful, *but we live!* Men "*Wondered* at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth," Luke 4: 22. Have we not sat in holy wonder as we have taken account of the words which have proceeded from the mouth of Christ? How blessed to read in the gospels the actual words that Jesus uttered; they are infinitely precious. They reveal to us as nothing else could, the eternal thoughts of the heart of God. They are words of preciousness, and graciousness, and beauty, and yet withal words of authority. Do we not wonder that such an One as He should speak to us of such glorious matters?

In Luke 8 we see this glorious Person in the boat with His disciples. It is so easy for us to be occupied with the breakdown around, and the apparent success of the enemy to spoil the testimony, but do not let us be occupied unduly with conditions around. Let us take full account of the fact that *Christ is with us in the boat* in all our forebodings and weakness. They "were in jeopardy." The winds were powerful; and today the winds are boisterous against the testimony, the position is such that we are helpless ourselves to deal with it. But beloved brethren, *we have Christ with us in the boat*, and the glory of that blessed Person is undiminished.

Christ will do wondrously; He will fill us with holy wonder and amazement and worship at the way in which *He* can handle the situation. He can say, "peace be still;" He can still the troublesome waves; He can cause the winds to abate; He can carry us safely through, and He *will* carry us through. We are not the testimony, Christ is the testimony, and the testimony will go through, and we can go through with Him in wonderment at the skilful way in which He can guide His own through all the labyrinth of ecclesiastical failure. "What manner of Man is this?" we may well exclaim. It is through Him, and through Him alone, that there shall be glory to God "in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages," (Eph. 3: 21).

In Luke 9 we have the power of Satan as he seeks to bring about the destruction of the rising generation. We are often concerned as we see the young people coming under the malign influence of Satan, and thus departing from the pathway. Many have come under the destructive influence of the god of this world. In Luke 9 the disciples could not deal with the situation. Why could they not deal with it? Because the spirit of their own greatness and importance was working in them! The only power that could deal with the matter came by prayer and fasting, and these things were deficient. Beloved brethren, prayer brings God in, and fasting keeps the world out. We shall never hold the young people if we are not marked by prayer and fasting. In the presence of the weakness and helplessness of the disciples, Christ speaks the word, and the enemy is completely routed. He spoke the word and "they were all amazed," they "were astonished at the glorious greatness of God," (verse 43, N.T.). Why could *He* speak the word? Perfect in His humanity, standing here for His God, in all the excellence that marked His Holy Person, immune from every attack of the enemy, and thus able to deal in power with every element that would seek to weaken and destroy the people of God.

In Luke 11 we have a man with a dumb spirit, unable to speak; no praise issuing from his lips to God. It is the work of the enemy to stop the praise of God. Again this blessed Man dismisses the enemy, and "the dumb spake, and the people *wondered*". Have we not wondered as we have listened to the praise from lips hitherto unable to respond to God?

Think of a man like J. Newton, that slave trader, a wicked, obscene, swearing shipmaster, and as he comes under the power of the Christ of God there comes from his pen those beautiful words that we so often sing:-

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!"

The most unexpected quarter! Who would have thought that from such lips there would come that precious note of praise. We may well *wonder* at the marvellous things that He who is "Wonderful" does.

This blessed Man is He who has been into death, He has suffered on the cross. He Himself could say, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" And there on the other side of death there is a living blessed man, not a spirit, but a Man, a living Man, and the bringing into display of a scene filled with the glory of God, to the wonderment of the whole universe, hangs upon this blessed Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. The scene of failure, marked by weakness and lack of response to God shall be swept away, and the words of the Psalmist fulfilled, "Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD," (Psalm 150: 6). What a glorious consummation of the ways of God!