

The Cross and Eternal Glory - Part 1

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the concept of glory as God's nature in expression, and how it relates to our Christian lives and worship.

Duration: 35:31

Scripture: John 1:14, Acts 7:2, 1 Corinthians 2:8, Ephesians 1:17, 1 Peter 4:14, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Eternal Glory"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of glory in the foundation of the Christian faith. The New Testament reveals that glory is a central and governing factor in this dispensation. The faith of believers rests upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone. The speaker also mentions the four relationships of glory in the New Testament, highlighting that the ultimate end for believers is to experience the glory of God.

Transcript

The first letter of Peter, chapter 5, verse 10, And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, After that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you, to him be the dominion forever and ever. I want to place over this time, a fragment out of that verse, it is this. His eternal glory.

His eternal glory. That indicates an all-governing object and end of God. Glory.

Whenever and wherever there has existed a state which has answered to God's mind, there has been glory. Glory is always present when things correspond to the mind of God. Because glory is the mind of God.

Of course sometimes we have instances in the scriptures, the appearance of the glory has been unto judgment. But even so, it was a testimony against that which did not correspond to the Lord's mind. You remember when the divinely appointed servant of God, Moses, was challenged by some as to his position.

We are told the glory appeared in the door of the tabernacle and judgment followed. Then at the commencement of the last book of the Bible, the book of the Revelation, we have the Lord Jesus presented in glory. And it is again to judge things.

But it is always, whether it is in blessing or in judgment, a setting forth of God's mind. God's mind is a glorious mind. It is a mind of glory.

And glory is timeless. It is his eternal glory. Now seeing that this is an all-governing object and end of God, a definition of glory is called for, which would just fit into every occasion when the word is used.

And of course that is a very big job. You have only to look at a concordance and you will find that you have on hand hundreds, more than 400 occasions in the Bible, the use of this word glory. And yet there is a definition that will fit in to every instance.

What I mean is this, when glory is mentioned, you ask the question, well what does that mean? What does glory mean? Then if you define glory, you will see how the definition or the word truly understood just fits in to every situation. The definition which we have given before, according I think to what the scripture makes perfectly clear, is that glory is God's nature. And a state of glory is a state which corresponds to God's nature.

Glory therefore is the divine nature in expression. If you have divine love in perfection, you have glory. If there is a state of love, divine love amongst the Lord's people, then it's glory.

Not necessarily something like a blaze of life that you see, but which you sense. You sense it when there is a state of divine life in fullness. There is no death at all, but it's all life.

The river is flowing in fullness. It's a state of glory. When faith is free from all questions and doubts and mistrust, it's perfect faith.

Then it's a state of glory. When holiness, divine holiness, is present without any jarring contradictory element, sin, then it's glory. And we know what we mean by just thinking of the opposite to all these.

We know that when there is strife and discord and unlove, hatred, malice, suspicion, and all those things which are just contrary to love, there is no glory. There is no glory. It's a wretched situation, and no one would call that glorious.

Or in any of the other cases, where for some reason or other, death, spiritual death, has been allowed to come in. And we touch the realm of death and dead things. We get on to some line of conversation where we are touching things that are dead.

They don't live with God. There is no glory. We are sorry that ever we touch them, mention them, refer to them.

Death has no glory about it. When you and I get into a state of doubting and questioning, questioning the Lord and begin to waver in our faith, the glory goes out. And it never comes back until we get back to faith and confidence in the Lord.

And when sin is allowed to persist, evil is given a place, there is no glory. So I think the definition is a sound one, a right one. Glory is just the divine nature in expression.

And wherever and whenever that is so, then it is glory. It is glory. The glory comes in.

Glory is initial whenever we get into line with the mind of God. Take the experience of one who comes first to the Lord, by a new born soul, a new convert, one who has really come into the meaning of salvation

right at the beginning. That one thinks that they are ready for heaven at once.

There is nothing more to be done. Indeed, if they haven't gone to heaven, heaven has come to them. This is glory.

There is a touch of glory. That is true, it is initial. It is also occasional.

That is, whenever there is some experience by which we come into a fuller correspondence to the will of God, there is a new uprising of glory. It may be through some tremendous spiritual battle. Some controversy that the Lord has had with us, or we with him.

Something upon which the Lord has put his finger, and we have not just been willing to let go, to yield. Something like that, where everything for the time being has been held up in our relationship with the Lord, or in our spiritual life. And then, as we say, we get through.

We get through on that. We get that thing settled and cleared up, and out of the way immediately there is a new expression of glory. It fills our hearts.

It is initial. It is occasional. We can have many times of glory in our Christian lives.

It is progressive. Progressive in this sense that it is an increasing matter. The Christian finds that time to time he or she is taken into a deeper, deeper experience of trial, affliction, sorrow.

Something deeper and more difficult than anything before. And it is a time when there does not seem to be very much glory. The glory seems to be veiled.

There is nothing necessarily wrong about that, dear friends. Come to that again in a minute. That is the common experience, and that is recognized as being true to Christian experience.

But, you see, God is the God of glory. We are called unto his eternal glory. And what the Lord means by this is more glory.

The deeper the trial, the greater the suffering, the greater the glory presently. It is only to bring about the glory in fuller measure. It is progressive like death.

And so there seems to be no end to these going down experiences, but equally there is no end to the coming up experience. If there seems to be no end to the dark experiences, be assured that there is no end to the light one. Sometimes I have been in the lift or elevator, tried to make a contact with the operator, and I have said like this, Well, you know a great deal about the ups and downs in life, don't you? Oh yes, of course, with a grumble.

But I say, make sure that the last one is up and not down, won't you? And the questioning look comes on to face, what do you mean by that? Well, you see, that is just what we do mean. And with the Lord's people, the last one is going to be up, not down. Simply because this is an all-governing object, an end of the law.

Do you believe it? That the end is not going to be down, it is going to be up. He is intending glory, who hath called you unto his eternal glory, and so what is initial, occasional, progressive is final. The Bible reveals that to be so, for the people of God.

That is a statement of general truth, of truth in general. Now if you look at your New Testament, you will find that glory is a central and a governing factor in the foundation of this particular dispensation, in a particular way. This dispensation, as you know, in a special way, is built upon, as the word says, the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

The faith of believers for this dispensation is thereby declared to rest upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of course they are the New Testament apostles and prophets, the apostles. Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone, that is the full foundation. Now when you look to the foundation of the apostles and prophets, upon which all faith in this dispensation rests, you find it is the foundation of glory.

Now, John, who was one of them, and not one of the least of them, said, we beheld his glory. And you look at his gospel and you find that word glory has a very large place in the gospel by John. It is glory.

Glory. And so John, long years after, says, summing it all up, their apprehension of Christ, what Christ had meant to them, and it is in the plural, we, the apostles, we beheld his glory. And everything rests upon that.

Peter, who again was not one of the least of the apostles, he in looking back upon what Christ had come to be to them, and referring to what evidently had made the greatest impression upon him, he said, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty, when there came from the excellent glory this voice. Now, that is rather remarkable in this way, that Peter, who was on the mount of transfiguration with the Lord, and as he put it afterward, years afterward, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty, when there came from the excellent glory this voice. It was not very long, only a little while after that, that Peter is found in complete darkness, doubting who the Lord was, doubting almost everything that the Lord had said, raising questions about the cross, because the cross to him seemed to be the greatest disaster that could happen.

Doubting the very resurrection, and because he had not laid hold of the significance of this really, denying his Lord thrice with vehemence, this as it were came right up from the dead. This all came back, this mount of transfiguration experience, it all came right back in this mighty way, and the years afterward, he wrote, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. You see, Peter's life and ministry subsequently rested upon the glory of Christ.

Upon glory, it came out of glory. I believe that the subsequent recollection, remembrance, recovery of what happened on the transfiguration mount was the inspiration strength of Peter's life and ministry. For us, for us, this whole dispensation, these men were saved by glory, that's the point.

These men were confirmed and established by glory. These men had their life and their ministry from the glory that they had seen in Christ. And Paul, by no means the least of the apostles, beheld the glory of Christ.

On his way to Damascus, he beheld the glory. Christ appeared to him in glory. And we have good reason to believe that that was not only the conversion of Paul, but everything that we know about Paul dates to that and sprang out of that.

And the wonderful thing about it is that the glory was attached to Jesus of Nazareth. Who art thou, Lord? He asked, I am Jesus of Nazareth. The significance of that, because that is the title of Christ in humiliation, of Christ as man.

And the glory, the effulgent glory of God of heaven attached to the man, Jesus of Nazareth. To get the implications of that is tremendous. Then attached to man.

And that became the very foundation of Paul's life and ministry. You see, dear friends, glory was the foundation of the apostles and prophets. And this whole dispensation for Christians rests upon that glory.

These men knew something about the glory. And that glory made them what they were. And gave them to us what we owe to them.

What we owe to those men. Now just for a minute or two, let us look at another aspect of this. The four relationships of glory in the New Testament.

We have them in this way. Acts 7, verse 2, Stephen opens his address to the Jewish rulers, elders, with these words. The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in error of the countenance.

The God of glory. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 17, uses this phrase. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.

The Father of glory. In his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 2, verse 8, he speaks like this. They crucified the Lord of glory.

The Lord of glory. And then Peter, in his first letter, chapter 4, verse 14, the Spirit of glory resteth upon you. Four relationships of glory.

The God of glory. The Father of glory. The Lord of glory.

The Spirit of glory. The triune God. Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

All designated by the word glory. Look at each one of these briefly. The God of glory.

Whenever the word or idea God comes into view or into mind, there is only one thing that is the right meaning of that. If it is God, then the idea is worship, isn't it? It's worship. The God of glory, then the end of all God's ways will be worship.

The glory will be in terms of worship. You see, this is Abraham. The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Er of the Chaldees.

And you remember in our last conference, we pointed out that in Er of the Chaldees, worship was given to two thousand different forms of deities. And God said, this isn't good enough. Two thousand deities getting worship? Only one God who ought to have the worship.

Come out of that, Abraham. Come out of that. And you notice that the whole history of God's dealings with Abraham, indeed his choosing of Abraham, was to constitute a people who gave all worship to one God only.

Thou shalt have none other God besides me. A people who give God his sole place and rights unreservedly, undividedly, all the worship to him alone. That was the meaning of the calling of Abraham.

Out from all other worships to worship the one, the only true and living God. A people, a seed in whom God got his rights and got them thoroughly without any reservation. That was the object.

And God says, when that happens, when I have my place and sole place and there is no dividedness about this matter of who has the worship and who gets the rights, then there'll be a state of glory. We can

look right through, can't we, to the end. The end will be there will be no other gods, no other objects of worship, no dividing of allegiance with God.

He will be God alone. Paul touches on that when he says that even the Son himself shall be subject, that God may be all in all. And that will be glory.

It is glory in terms of worship, the God of glory. If you and I, and this is saying a very elementary thing, if you and I believe in God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ as our God, claim him to be our God, believe him to be our God, see what it means. It's something which would lead to glory, but it's a challenge.

All day long as to whether he is after all God, our only God, altogether God. Enough on that. The God of glory.

The Father of glory. So each title has its own significance. The Father of glory.

Well, fatherhood means that there must be children, or else it doesn't have any meaning at all. And true fatherhood means that the children take the character of the parent. This is the letter to the Ephesians, as you see.

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, the Father in whom every family is called. You see, the idea is a family now. God's family taking the character of God, deriving the very life and nature of God, and expressing it.

I need not dwell upon that in the natural realm. So often it's so easy to see the family likeness, as we say. The family likeness.

And to say, our son, well we know whose son you are. Not always, but often. In this case there's no question about it.

Or there ought to be no question about it, whose children we are. Whose children we are. It ought to be possible for it to be said, we know who you belong to.

Meaning, know who your father is. There's the family likeness. Now if there is a real partaking of the divine nature, if there is here the expression of his fatherhood, in the measure in which that is true, it will be glory.

He is the father of glory. That is, the children partake of his nature, and the nature of God in expression is glory. Well that is capable of being submitted and subjected to test, isn't it, again, the way in which I said just now.

If there's something not like the father about us, something ugly, something that is a contradiction to the likeness of our heavenly father, well there's no glory. But get that cleared up. Some bit of unlove.

Something about us that's really not the Lord. Get it cleared up and out of the way and what happens? Well the only word is it's glory. Sensed inwardly, enjoyed inwardly and enjoyed with others.

Glory comes in. Take it between two Christians. Get that ugly thing dealt with and removed and what glory comes between them.

Well it's so simple, but that is the father of glory. The divine nature displayed in children. Then coming to 1 Corinthians 2, the Lord of glory.

I think this has a double meaning. First of all, it clearly indicates Christ's place. Christ's rightful place.

The Lord of glory. It's a title given to him that he is the Lord of glory. Meaning, in this sense, the Lord from glory.

The Lord whose place is in glory. The Lord whose rightful inheritance is glory. He's the Lord of glory in the utter and absolute sense.

And again, it is only when Jesus is really Lord that we know the glory. Oh this long drawn out battle of his Lordship. What a man!

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