

The Glory of God - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the concept of glory as the ultimate expression of God's satisfaction and the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in relation to glory and suffering.

Duration: 33:13

Scripture: Psalm 121:4, Acts 12:7-10, Ephesians 1:15, Philippians 2:13, James 2:1, 1 Peter 4:12

Topics: "Glory Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the story of Peter's imprisonment and miraculous escape. He emphasizes the contradiction and confusion that arose when Peter found himself in the dungeon, bound and bleeding. The speaker suggests that it would have been impossible for any human effort to free Peter that night, as the forces of the world were determined to keep him captive. However, the Lord of glory intervened and sent an angel to release Peter from his chains and lead him to freedom. The speaker connects this story to the concept of glory, defining it as God's expression of satisfaction and delight, and encourages believers to rejoice in their participation in Christ's sufferings. The sermon concludes by highlighting the significance of Peter's letters, which were written years after his miraculous escape.

Transcript

A word of prayer. Lord, as it is a matter of our spiritual capacity that determines how much we can receive, we do pray for enlargement this evening, real enlargement, Lord. Lord, we may be enabled to receive what Thou dost want us to have, not less, not more.

We just pray that it may be Thy measure, Thy measure, Lord, Thou wilt see to it that it is what Thou Thyself hast desired for us in this hour, so help us for Thy name's sake. In pursuing the matter which has been before us all day today, I want to call to your remembrance three fragments of the word in the letter to the Ephesians, letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 15. For this cause, I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus, which is among you, and which ye show toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Now in the letter of James, chapter 2. My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. The next letter is the first of Peter, first letter of Peter, chapter 4, verse 12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you.

But inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice, that at the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye, because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you. For those who have not been with us earlier, may I just say that we have been led to be occupied with the matter of the end of all God's works, being glory, and we have defined glory as being the expression of God's full and final satisfaction.

God giving out from Himself His pleasure, His delight, and like a heavenly contagion, those who come within its range and its reach are very conscious of the Lord being pleased, satisfied. You know, He is in one place translated as the blessed God, but the original says the happy God, the happy God. You know, if you come into the presence or go into the presence of people who are very happy, really happy, you catch and are affected by and infected by their happiness.

It's possible to go amongst people who are heartily laughing, and you begin to laugh and you don't know what you're laughing for. You don't know what they're laughing about, but you begin to laugh. The atmosphere influences you.

Now, if God is like that, is that He's happy, He's satisfied, He's well pleased, He's delighted, and you come within touch of Him when He's like that, you catch something from Him, you feel that happiness. Now, that is exactly the meaning of glory, God being completely contented with a situation or with a life, with a person. If you should happen to be that person, you just take from God something of His contentment, satisfaction.

It's a glorious sense of contentedness, of satisfaction, of blessedness, and that is the meaning of glory. So that the end of everything that is really of God is that, that wonderful power of His own personal pleasure. I think there's nothing in all the universe so blessed as to have a sense that the Lord is well pleased, the Lord is well pleased.

It must have been a great day for Abraham, a wonderful day, inexpressible, when God called him His friend. Abraham, my friend, my friend. Or for Daniel, when the messenger of God said, O man, grisly beloved, what do you want more than that from God? That is glory, isn't it? Well, God is working toward that in all His works, in the universe, in creation, and in the redeemed.

Now, you will have noticed from the three passages that we read, that we find that the triune God, the three persons of the Trinity, are personally related to glory. First, the Father of glory. Secondly, the Lord Jesus, the Lord of glory.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of glory. Each member of the Godhead takes character from this very word, glory. Each person of the Trinity is supremely concerned with glory.

It opened up a very large door. I'm not going to enter that door very far this evening. I'll leave Brother Harrison to take up in the future that if he wants to.

And show you through the Bible how God, as Father, the first person of the Trinity, is always concerned about glory. And how the Lord Jesus, the second person in the Trinity, is always working on the line of glory. And then how the Holy Spirit, all the way along, is operating toward glory.

As glory or as the governing concern. I'll leave that. That's a long, long line of very blessed revelation.

The point is for me just now, that the Godhead is united. One in this thing. This alone thing.

They are united concerning glory. Their interest is one interest. As we have called it today, their priority.

The priority of the Triune God is glory. All I am going to do this evening is just to say a little word about each of these designations. Father of glory, Lord of glory, Spirit of glory.

And may the Lord give us something in our hearts from our brief meditation. The Father of glory. What does that mean? Well, it means that God is the source and emanation of glory.

That is, that all that comes from Him, on the principle of fatherhood. The principle of fatherhood is that He is the source, the beginning, and the projector. That's fatherhood.

And it means that all that really emanates from God has as its very purpose and destiny glory. We are children of God. But the very object, purpose of our being children of God, in God's mind, is that we should come to glory.

That is, that we should be brought to that position where at last, oh wonderful thought, too, too wonderful for us to grasp, but at last we should come to that place where God says, I am satisfied, perfectly satisfied, content. Can you imagine God ever saying that of you? Almighty God, eternal, perfect, holy, everything that is, that is great. Looking down upon us and saying, I am well pleased.

Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, the very satisfaction of my father heart. Too much for us to grasp just now, isn't it? As if we know ourselves at all. But that is the meaning of His fatherhood.

He has begotten us. He has brought us into being as His children. He is responsible for our coming into being as His children.

He's taken the responsibility of us as His children. And all with this one object of bringing us along the line, along the way, the end of which is an entering into that unspeakable awareness that He has nothing whatever against us, but is satisfied to the last possible degree, Father of glory. And whatever comes from God, whether it is His children or His creation, really comes out from God, comes out as destined for that glory of His perfect satisfaction.

The end of the Bible finds things like that. A state of glory, a glorious condition which just means the outgoing, the emanation of God's own perfect satisfaction. Paul puts it this way, foreordained.

Foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son. And what is that? His Son! Father! Son! My beloved in whom I am well pleased, conformed to that, to inherit His own attitude toward His Son, and to come into that position and condition that His Son occupies of perfect satisfaction to the Father. His Father dealings with us, you see, are along that line.

My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor think when thou art rebuked of Him whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. What is it all about, the chastening? No, chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous. But afterward, it beareth, it bringeth forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

What is that? That complete peace in the heart with God's sense of righteousness satisfied. Father of glory. That's enough for that for the moment.

Our Lord Jesus, the Lord of glory. So James calls Him. Wonderful thing for James, his own brother in the flesh, to say that of Him.

There was a time when James, his brother in the flesh, did not believe on Him, you know. For his own brethren believed not on Him. That's what it said about formerly.

Of course, we've got a very shrewd idea of why that was, you know. Because James and the other brothers of Jesus after the flesh in those days were a bit worldly. And they had an eye to business, to success, to popular acceptance, and especially to stand well with the authorities.

Of course, that is worldliness, isn't it? The spirit of the world. To stand well with the authorities. And this brother of theirs, this elder brother of theirs, he's taking the course that will get him into trouble with the people who have it in their power.

Take from him everything. And we belong to his family and that means we'll suffer because he's taken that line. Well, we leave that.

That's fairly, I think, a fairly true judgment of that statement. His own brethren did not believe on Him. They could not accept the way that He was taking.

It was not going to bring popularity. But here is this brother, this brother of Jesus. He's many years afterward calling Him the Lord of Glory.

Something's happened. The Lord of Glory, his own brother. He didn't believe in Him once.

Now he calls Him the Lord of Glory. That's a wonderful thing. But what does He mean and what does it mean to call Him the Lord of Glory? Well, if anybody's Lord, you know, they have everything under their control.

Don't they? If you should be a Lord, you've got things under your control. They're in your power. You dictate how they're going to work out.

Yes, you're Lord in this situation. Indeed, you're Lord in all situations. Or He is.

And as Lord of Glory, He's in the position of mastery. Peter. Peter, who at one time, you know, denied Him.

And denied Him vehemently. Later said, He is Lord of all. He is Lord of all.

A big thing happened in Peter too. As well as James. Or in all of them.

However, Lord. And we know from the very context of those words of Peter. That Peter was at that time having to recognize the absolute mastery of the Lord Jesus.

I won't go back to remind you of the context. The mastery of the Lord Jesus. Peter was arguing a bit.

It's very strange. Peter should at that time have been arguing with the Lord Jesus. Not so, Lord.

Nothing unclean has ever entered my mouth. Not so, Lord. And Peter had to succumb to the mastery.

And he did. And then he said, He is Lord of all. Meaning that he was in charge.

Both of Peter and of every situation. And being in charge, this situation is going to work out to the end that He intends it to. And then when James says, Lord of Glory.

It means that the Lord Jesus is in charge of everything to make it work out for glory. Now, you've only got to begin your book of the Acts of the Apostles, as it's called. Wrongly, I think.

And go through. And see the Lord of Glory holding the situations. Yes.

Phase after phase. Stage after stage. You've only got just to lift one or two examples out.

Peter is in prison. His feet in the stocks. Four quaternions of guards.

The doors closed. Inner and outer doors. And Herod has made very sure that that man's not going to escape.

This looks a pretty difficult proposition, doesn't it? I doubt whether it would have been possible for any man to have liberated Peter that night. At any rate, all the forces of this world were determined that Peter should not escape. He is a key man.

A strategic man in this new movement. Indeed, he is the key man. So, keep him safe.

All right. Do all you can. Or you will.

Take every precaution. Every measure. To make this secure.

The Lord of Glory has other ways. And so an angel comes. Smiles Peter.

He's asleep. How wonderful. Jesus is Lord.

You can go to sleep under situations where tomorrow you're going to be brought out for execution. In the condemned cell, and you know tomorrow, you're going the same way as James, the other James, to be executed. And go to sleep.

Through the night. Well, that wants the Lord of Glory to make you do that, doesn't it? It needs you to be able to say, well, the Lord's got this thing in hand. However it turns out, the Lord's got this thing in hand, so I'm going to sleep.

I'm just... I remember a man away here in the wild days long ago. Was traveling and came to a shack. And it was a perilous place where the bears were roaming.

And he was very tired after traveling all day. He couldn't get into the shack. He could only rest under the awning outside.

And so he lay down. And he belonged to the Lord. And before he settled down, he read a psalm.

He that keepeth this rite shall neither slumber nor sleep. He said, well Lord, it's no use two of us keeping awake. If you say you're going to keep awake all night, I'm going to sleep.

You have a good night, we'll see. That's trusting the Lord. And Peter went to sleep.

And the angel smote him. Struck off his chains, his fetters. Rise up, follow me.

Left the guards, left the cell, left the chains, out through the first door. And out through the next until they came to the outer gates which opened to them of their own accord. And Peter was landed out there in the open.

This circumstance, so seemingly adverse and impossible, was in the hands of the Lord of Glory. Now the glory, we got his letters years afterward. Wonderful letters, aren't they? Wonderful letters after.

And a wonderful life. So much wealth has come to us through Peter's ministry in these letters. Glory.

Glory. The Lord of Glory. Oh, and one more thing from that book.

We're in Philippi. Oh, silence, all right. Because the Lord sent them there.

They essayed to go into Bithynia and the spirit of Jesus suffered them not. They essayed to go into Asia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost. And that night, wondering what this means, why we are not allowed to go this way or that, in a vision, Paul saw the man of Macedonia.

He heard him say, come over into Macedonia and help us. And assuredly gathering, said he, assuredly gathering, while Luke said it, that we had been called to preach the gospel, in Macedonia, Europe, they set sail, arrived in Philippi. Quite sure the Lord has sent them there.

Quite sure the Lord has sent them there. And the next thing, they find themselves in a dungeon, feet fast in the thorns, and their backs bleeding, arters, horror, lashing. Now, what do you make of this? What are you going to do about this? Seems an absolute contradiction.

A big mistake has been made. We've got into confusion over our guidance. No, not a bit.

In that condition, they're singing, praising God, midnight. The Lord of Glory has got the situation in hand. And before the morning, it's proved, the earthquake, prisoners released, the jailer and his house saved and baptized, and the church in Philippi established.

Amongst the first members was a jailer, and his family. His family. They don't believe they were infants, because it says the apostle taught them.

But you don't put up a little innocent baby in a chair and begin to preach the gospel to it, or teach the things of Christ. They were intelligent, old enough to understand the teaching and preaching of Paul, and to accept it, so they were all baptized as responsible persons. They were amongst the first members of that church, and we have that beautiful letter from Paul's own prison years afterward, when he was in Rome.

The letter to the Philippians. We wouldn't sacrifice that letter for a lot, would we? Very precious. The Lord of Glory, you see.

That is the book of the acts of the Holy Spirit, or the acts of the Lord of Glory. He's in charge. I wish we could always believe it when we're in prisons, and tied up, and things are all against, and we are having a difficult time.

We could always just say, the Lord is the Lord of Glory, and he's in charge of this, and the end of this is going to be glory. The end of this is going to be glory. Well, it works out that way, even though he has to say to us afterward, oh, you of little faith, therefore did you doubt.

Although we, under the trial, sometimes feel that there's anything but glory in this situation, in our condition, in the end, he is faithful. He is faithful. And we find that glory is the end of his strange ways.

He is the Lord of Glory. That is, he controls everything with glory in view. Then, lastly, a brief word.

Peter calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Glory. The Spirit of Glory. Now the context is necessary as the background of that very title, of the Holy Spirit.

And if you read this first letter of Peter, you'll see it's very largely about the sufferings of the Lord's people, to whom he was writing. It says that he is writing to the elect scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. So on.

And then he opens up on this matter of the sufferings of these people. Isn't that strange, concerning the fiery trial? Just to try you with some strange thing that happened unto you. And there's a lot about the sufferings of the Lord's people in this letter of Peter.

And when he has brought the sufferings up, mentioned them, referred to them, he has two things that he links with that. First Grace, and then Glory. Grace and Glory.

Grace issuing in Glory. And it's very helpful to notice how he speaks of this word, or this thing, Grace. Sometimes he uses the word properly.

That is, he does call it Grace. He uses the word Grace. Unfortunately, in our translation, there are places where he changes the word.

The word is changed in the English translation. And he says, If when you are buffeted, life is mine, live evermore in me, and help me see that nothing can untwine thy life from mine. From that.

Well, a bit of a memory. Something, isn't it? Well, this is what Peter is talking about. The sufferings.

The fiery trial. And he says, Grace in that means Glory. The Spirit of Glory.

The Lord help us. We can say these things, and as I say them, I say them carefully, guardedly. We can be so put to the test on things that we say, you know.

But the Spirit of Glory can take hold of the things which could destroy us. Could be our undoing if we had the wrong reaction to them. And can turn them to Glory.

This suffering, this affliction, this trial, this thing, Paul said, Lest by reason of the greatness of the revelation I should be exalted, there was given to me a messenger of Satan, the thorn in the flesh. For this thing I sought the Lord thrice. And when Paul sought the Lord, you may take it that he did so.

And very thoroughly. And when he did it three times, you may be sure that Paul put himself into that. Take this away, Lord.

Remove this thing, Lord. Change this situation. Take this hardening out of my life.

But he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee. My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmity.

The Spirit of Glory can take hold of our trials. Will, if we will trust him, and turn the dark things, the hard things, the painful things, into glory. That is, in those things lead us to find God's pleasure, God's satisfaction, God's well done, well done.

And what more glorious thing could we desire than that we should hear him say, Well done. Good. Faithful servant.

Enter into the joy of my Lord. Father of glory. Lord of glory.

Spirit of glory. The Lord bless this word to your heart. Do it, Lord, we pray.

Make the world a blessing. Whether it meets a present need, as undoubtedly it does for some, or whether it is planted to be drawn upon in some day of trial and difficulty that is ahead of us. Keep it alive.

Make it a powerful means of help. May we all come into the forward reach of that ultimate glory and walk in its way into the day of the fullness of the glory. In the name of the Lord Jesus.

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