

Giving the Lord His Place

by Tom Macartney

The central issue in all our lives is giving the Lord His place and securing a place for Him in our hearts and lives.

Scripture: Psalm 27:4, Mark 11:15, John 2:13, 1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:22, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Gods Glory", "Christian Priorities"

Description

Tom Macartney preaches on the importance of giving the Lord His central place in our lives, drawing parallels from the lives of David, Paul, and the Lord Jesus Himself. Just as Jesus cleansed the temple to restore His Father's rightful place, we are redeemed to prioritize God's glory in our hearts. David's thirst for God and passion to secure the Lord's central place exemplify selfless sincerity, while Paul's focus on knowing Christ and exalting Him in every aspect of life underscores the significance of God's rightful place.

Transcript

This holy concentration can also be clearly seen, for example, in the lives of David and Paul, but first let us note it in the life of the Lord Jesus Himself.

It is impressive and significant that His ministry began and ended with a cleansing of the temple. Twice He cleansed His Father's house, as if to say, "This is primarily why I came. I came for My Father's glory, satisfaction and rights, to recover for Him His rightful place in the hearts of men." It is important for us to realise that Christ has redeemed us first and foremost so that His Father may have His rightful place in our hearts. And the Gospels bear witness to the single-minded devotion with which the Lord Jesus accomplished this task for His Father.

When we turn to David we see the same thing, for he was a man after God's own heart. Again and again in his life and psalms he stands revealed as, (i) a man thirsting for God, for a deeper knowledge of The Lord. He wrote: "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him, in his temple."

As a result, he was (ii) a man with a consuming passion to find a place for the Lord, to secure for the Lord the central place in everything. "I will allow no sleep to my eyes, no slumber to my eyelids, till I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."

For David this meant bringing the ark to Jerusalem and building the temple. The first he was privileged to do, but the second was reserved for Solomon. Yet, without resentment, David prepared with all his might for the building of the temple he would never see, an impressive testimony to his selfless sincerity. He really wanted the Lord to have the central place among His people.

As Israel's history unfolds we find that everything turns on this. When the temple was completed under Solomon, the glory of the Lord filled the house, all was glory, joy and blessing. But later, for example, we read of the tragic reign of Ahaz who shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, thereby robbing the Lord of His place, and then of his son Hezekiah who opened the doors of the house of the Lord, with consequent joy and blessing. Finally, of course, Israel had to go into exile to learn the inevitable consequence of not giving the Lord His place. Everything turned upon this one essential.

It is hardly necessary to remind ourselves that Paul, like David, was a man concentrating on one thing. In Philippians 3 he tells us of his personal quest to know and gain Christ as his heavenly prize, and all through his letters he reveals his consuming passion that Christ shall have His rightful place in every Christian and in every church. Beyond what David could understand, Paul saw the church as God's spiritual temple, a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. This was his overriding concern: "Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? You are not your own; you were bought at a price."

"Don't you know that you (plural, the church at Corinth) are God's temple, and that God's Spirit lives in you?"

As we read Israel's story, the issues seem so simple and obvious that we may be inclined to wonder how His people could be so foolish. But what shall we say of the church's history? It is very similar, with exactly the same issue at the heart of the problem: Giving The Lord His place". And are we any better today? How far are we exalting Him in all things?

Have we understood that the chief reason for proclaiming the gospel is not that lost sinners should be saved, but that the Lord should recover what He has lost? A rebel race is robbing God of His rightful place. "He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him." This is the heart of sin. This explains the tragedy of human history. Repentance means giving God His place, and salvation can come to no one on any other basis. Have we not erred grievously in our man-centred gospel preaching, in our pre-occupation with human need, in forgetting the enormity of our sin against God?

And as Christians, do we always give the Lord His place in our lives? Has He got the run of the whole house or is He confined to the guest room? Yes, this has a very personal application. This is the central issue in all our lives and the key to all spiritual progress.

And where is Christ in His church? Is He at the centre and in control of our life together, or is He perhaps even outside the door, as at Laodicea? Do we meet to worship Him, or largely to please ourselves? Has the Head of the church any say in what we do when we gather, or is everything predetermined by habit and custom, or planned by us? Is the Holy Spirit the source of what goes on, or is it simply religious self-expression? Is our concern that the Lord should 'enjoy' the meeting, or just to hear another good message and sing our favourite hymns or choruses? Are we concerned to know the divine presence, to have a fresh awareness of the glory of God, or are we content with mere routine? Does it matter to us whether or not the Lord is effectively present? Securing a place for the Lord among His people has always been the crucial issue, never more so than today. There is so much of man in evidence today (man in his pride, man ruled by his traditions or his emotions) that it is often impossible to see the Lord at all. And few

seem to notice the Lord's absence and to care about it, whereas the majority is content long as the meetings go on.

This then is the one thing essential, that the Lord should have His central place in everyone and everything. This is to be the focal point of all our endeavours. This is the true work of the Spirit. As the Lord Jesus came to find a place for His Father in human hearts, so the Holy Spirit has come to find a place for the Son. "He shall glorify Me." The Spirit has come to secure a place for Christ in rebel hearts, thereby bringing salvation, to make more and more room for Christ in every one of us Christians, and to establish Christ as the exalted, controlling Head of every church, activity and gathering. How far are we cooperating with the Holy Spirit in His sole concern to glorify Christ by giving Him the central place in everything?

Bible references: Mark 11:15-18; Luke 8:14; 10:41, 42; John 1:11; 2:13-22; 4:34;16:14 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20; Eph. 2:22; Rev. 3:20; 1 Sam. 13:14; 2 Chron. 5:14; 28:24; 29:3; Psalm 27:4; Psalm 63; Psalm 132:4, 5

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