

## The Glory of God

June 6, 2021

Last week I was reading a novel with a fictional president. In the story a crisis is occurring and the president needs to be briefed by a major in the army. He is out of uniform because he was on leave and summoned at a moments notice. So here he is in the oval office, dressed in jeans, getting ready to brief the president of the united states for the first time.

The president ordered a coffee service cart sent up for the meeting. The story reads that the president worked through problems best when his hands were busy doing something. So, he, the President of the United States, was working the coffee cart. He was asking everyone what they wanted in their coffee, fixing it, and then handing them their cup.

The story reads that the major was embarrassed to be served coffee by the President of the United States. The author did not need to explain why. There are proper ways to respond to such an important person. Out of deference for his position we address him formally by the title, Mr. President. We stand unless he invites us to be seated. We speak to him only when spoken to. We don't treat him informally like one of our buddies or coworkers. The president serving coffee does not fit with our accepted norms. We don't expect important people to be serving us coffee.

Now let's switch scenes. Let's suppose you are sitting on a high hillside looking over a beautiful valley, or you are in the valley looking up to a majestic mountain, or you are at the beach watching the waves, and you suddenly come to the realization that there must be an powerful deity that created the earth. What is the proper thing to do with this realization?

You need to address him. You need to speak to the creator. In-other-words, you need to pray, even if you have never done so before. Likely, you would stumble along since you are not used to praying. You might introduce yourself. You might seek more information about God.

The next morning, again, you must acknowledge the existence of God. You might ask about your purpose, why he made you, what he expects of you. You might request help with the things that lie before you this day. These might include school, a job, relationships, whatever.

The next day you would need to acknowledge God, and the next, and the next, and everyday after that. The presence of someone so important cannot be ignored. That would not be proper. That would not be right.

My point is this: **There is a response that is proper when you come to the realization that there is a god, even if all you know is that He is real. You must consider him as you live your life.**

We are continuing a series of sermons on misunderstood and/or misapplied passages of the Bible. Today we are in Romans 3.

**Romans 3:23 (NIV) "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,..."**

Note that this verse is part of a larger sentence. The sentence starts in verse 22 and runs through verse 26. We are just dealing with the two phrases in verse 23.

The first phrase is “for all have sinned”. Paul had been making that point in the previous verses. He quotes from several Old Testament passages that describe the sinfulness of the Israelites. Hence, the sins he is speaking of are the breaking of God’s commands.

**“For all have sinned” refers to God’s people breaking God’s commands.**

The second phrase is “fall short of the glory of God.”

**“Fall short of the glory of God” refers to a different class of sin, not the breaking of revealed commands.**

I have heard it taught dozens and dozens of times that this means the same as the first phrase. I believe this to be a mistake. The mistake centers on the word “glory.” Paul is writing of the glory of God, not the behavior of man. Whereas the usual interpretation of this phrase makes the word glory about us instead of God.

Let’s examine how the word glory is used in the Bible. **Glory is used for the power of God.** We see it used this way in Exodus 14:4.

**Exodus 14:4 (NIV) I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."**

This speaks of the power of God. The Egyptians would recognize the power of God through the plagues he would bring upon them, plagues their own magicians could not repeat.

So Glory is used for the power of God. Secondly, **Glory is used for the visible manifestations of God.**

In Exodus 24, God manifested his presence to the Israelites in smoke and fire on top of Mount Sinai.

**Exodus 24:15-17 (NIV) When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from the cloud. To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.**

God did not often manifest himself this way to the Israelites. He only did so a few times in the early days in the wilderness. He tells Moses why he did so in Exodus 19.

**Exodus 19:9 (NIV) The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you."**

Being Spirit God wasn’t the fire or the cloud. He only used those to impress the Israelites. They were not ready to trust an invisible God.

Glory is used for the visible manifestations of God. Third, **Glory is used for the honor of God.**

The word glory is used both as a noun for the honor of God and as a verb for honoring God in some way. We see it used this way in Joshua 7.

**Joshua 7:19 (NIV) Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me."**

God would be honored by Achan when Achan confessed his sin, submitting himself to the authority of God. A similar use of glory this way is seen in Psalm 29.

**Psalm 29:2 (NIV) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name...**

We honor God in our praises of him, in our witness about him to others, in our expressions of gratitude to him, and in our obedience. This is the way Jesus uses it in John 15.

**John 15:8 (NIV) This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**

We also honor him or glorify him when we treat him as the most important entity in the universe, in our lives. We glorify him when we live our lives purposely around him. And that is, I believe, how Paul uses it in Romans 3.

Glory is used for the honor of God. Fourthly, **Glory is used for the presence of God.**

**Psalm 73:24 (NIV) You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.**

You might think of this use of glory to mean heaven. The word glory is often used for heaven in hymns. But remember that the Israelites did not yet believe they would be in heaven after death. So to give it that meaning here is reading Christianity into it.

The author used it to refer to the presence of God. In the Psalm the writer has gone to the temple to kneel before God. The temple was where God lived among his people. So the author is using the word glory to represent the presence of God. God draws the person into his presence, into his glory, as he comes humbly in worship. This is what I hope for us all every Sunday in our gatherings.

God is the creator. God is the most important person in the universe. He is holy, all powerful, all knowing, all present. This is his glory.

**So what does "fall short of the glory of God" mean?**

**We fall short of the glory of God by failing to acknowledge him and live our lives in relationship to him as the most important one in the universe.**

Let's go back to our passage in Romans. Just as Paul made a case for the first phrase, he also made a case for the second phrase. He did so in chapter one.

**Romans 1:18-19 (NIV)** The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

What is the truth that mankind has held down or hidden? The truth is the existence of God.

**Romans 1:20-21 (NIV)** For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature- this is the glory of God. -have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

The glory of God, the existence of God, the importance of God, the power of God.... is revealed in the creation itself. The grandeur of the mountains and the valleys, the power of the ocean, these reveal that there is a god who made them. They did not just come about on their own.

**We call this Natural Revelation.** The word revelation means a revealing or disclosing of something. God reveals himself to us through nature, its immensity, its beauty, its order, and the power it took to make it. God has given us enough information to know that there is a God and that he is the powerful author of life.

Now why is the wrath, the just anger, of God being revealed in the gospel?

**Romans 1:21-23 (NIV)** For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

They ended up worshipping images of created things instead of worshipping the invisible creator himself. And in doing so, they suppressed or hid the truth about the creator.

Mankind is still doing that today. Most don't worship idols, but they worship themselves, a part of creation. Or they worship sex, of material things, or human power, all of which are still parts of the creation. For all such falling short of the glory of God, God's wrath is coming.

We have all broken specific commands. But we all have also failed to give the proper response to the realization that God is real. We have failed to live for his glory. We must continue to repent of this sin.