

# The Glory of God (1) - A smoking Furnace - A Burning Lamp

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Date: 27 July 2023

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [ 0 : 00 ] I'm going to sing to God's praise from Psalm 66. Psalm 66 from the beginning of the psalm.
- All lands to God in joyful sounds, aloft your voices raise. Sing forth the honour of his name, and glorious make his praise.
- Say unto God how terrible in all thy works art thou. Through thy great power thy foes to thee shall be constrained to bow.
- All on the earth shall worship thee, they shall thy praise proclaim in songs. They shall sing cheerfully unto thy holy name. Come, and the works that God hath wrought with admiration see, in zwerking to the sons of men most terrible a sea.
- Into dry land the sea he turned, and they a passage had, even marching through the flood on foot. There we in him were glad.
- [ 1 : 11 ] And so on. These verses one through to six, all lands to God in joyful sounds, aloft your voices raise. O lands to God in joyful sounds, aloft your voices raise.
- Sing for the honour of his name, and glorious make his praise.
- Sing unto God in joyful sounds, aloft your voice. Sing unto God in joyful sounds, aloft your voice. Sing unto God in halo, and Prevention of entendu sounds, aloft your heart. Sing unto thou among our hearts.
- Boosting to bow, up yourrament ■, Dieu Association oflivion ofulo tell all thy words to thee shall be ensued, such as you and-) of■.
- Wait till she andricia are angels áng, O Lord, may I shall worship thee, this child thy praise proclaim.
- [ 2 : 49 ] As songs they shall sing to thy holy unto thy holy hymn.
- Come on the words thy Lord have wrought with unabashed mercy.
- And to work in goodness of them, O charity.
- And to drive on the sea, and lead the positive heart.
- If marching through the high and high ground, there will be him where I.
- [ 4 : 22 ] I'd like us to turn back again for a short while to the chapter that we read. Together, we can read again at verse 17.
- Genesis chapter 15, read verse 17. And it came to pass that when the sun went down and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.
- I'm sure that the words of the psalmist are familiar to you.
- What do you think the psalmist meant by God's glory?

Have you ever experienced God's glory? Have you ever been in his presence when you became aware of God's glory?

[ 5 : 56 ] Or have you understood from your reading of the scripture that God is a glorious God by reason of what he has done?

Or what he has said? I think R.C. Sproul is of the opinion that the glory of God is connected or attached to his passion rather than to any of his deeds.

But it is something that we are made aware of in his passion rather than in his activities.

My thoughts were directed to the glory of God. And my intention is to consider with you over the next number of prayer meetings.

Occasions where we could argue that God was seen in his glory. I'm sure there are many passages of scripture that you could think of yourselves.

[ 7 : 21 ] And it will be a random selection. But I hope that as we look at it that we are brought face to face with the glory of God in all its various aspects.

I'm not saying it will be a complete study of all that God's glory entails.

Or that we will do anything other than scrape the surface off that topic. But I would like us to think of this as something that we need to remind ourselves of.

That God is a God who is a God of glory. The world in which we live is determined to reduce God to the level of...

A mere human extension. Something that is slightly better than the best of men or the best of women.

[ 8 : 41 ] Even if they think of God in any meaningful way. They are more comfortable with a God of who is more like themselves.

But the scripture reminds us that God is unlike ourselves. And that we are to remember that he has made his glory known to us.

If you read the words of the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans. The Romans. He there talks about the accountability of men.

He talks about the fact that we are all without excuse. Because God has made his glory known to all men.

Not just to believers but to all. So that they will be without excuse. Do you remember what he says? He reminds us of who God is.

[ 9 : 58 ] And why in the day of judgment all will have to answer to him. Because of the knowledge that he has given to all men.

He says. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them. For God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen.

Being understood by the things that are made even. His eternal power and Godhead. So that they are without excuse.

Because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God. Neither were thankful but became vain in their imaginations.

[ 11 : 05 ] And their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools. And changed the glory of the incorruptible God.

Into an image made like to corruptible man. Into birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. And so on.

God expects his glory to be acknowledged. Not just acknowledged but recognized and appreciated for what it is.

But the only way we can understand that is glimpse. At the occasional. More than occasional times.

That he reveals himself in his glory. We begin with Genesis 15. For no good reason. Other than. That I believe that here.

[ 12 : 06 ] We are brought face to face. With the glory of God. In a way that. It's not particularly emphasized. But.

There are elements to the dealings that he has. With. This man of faith. The father of the faithful. The one identified in the scripture.

As the friend of God. That we see. Some aspects of God's glory. In the way that he deals. With Abraham. While we work our way through this chapter.

I hope that we are reminded. Of. The. Awesome wonder. That there is. In. The God of all gods.

Coming down to. To speak to. Mankind. Because he is speaking to mankind. Through his servant.

[ 13 : 10 ] Abraham. Speaking to him. Of his interest. Speaking. To him. And to us. Through him. Of his.

Desire. To bring. Sinners. To himself. I think it is a passage. In which the. Glory of God.

Operates. At several levels. Of his. But I want us just to work our way. And think. Of how that. Possibly. Can be. If our.

See. Sproul is right. Then God. Should be at the forefront. Of our. Of our. Vision. In order to see. The glory of God. But God. Means us.

To see that glory. Through his. The way that he. Deals. With. Men. And bringing. That glory.

[ 14 : 06 ] To view. I believe that is at least. Part of it. The chapter. Begins. After these things. The word of the Lord.

Came unto Abraham. Of Abraham. As he is here. In a vision. Saying. Fear not. Abraham. I am thy shield. And my exceeding.

Great reward. Reward. Through his. Interaction. With Abraham. He. Brings to light. The relationship.

That exists. Between. God. And men. By way of covenant. There has been.

A lot of work. Done on the covenant. And. Many. Many. Discussions. Revolve around. The main core.

[ 15 : 02 ] Elements. That we can identify. That feature. Within. The. Covenant. In its operation. There are four.

Main parts. To it. I would imagine. That. Would be essential. To our understanding. Offered. What we see. Here.

Is that. God. Is dealing. With. His servant. Abraham. At a. Formal.

Level. He is. Dealing. With. As. His God. And. Abraham. His servant.

But at the same time. Although there is. This formal. Element. To the covenant. Where. Covenant. Obligations. Are. Declared.

[ 15 : 57 ] And. Emphasized. And the consequences. Of a breach. In. That. Formality. Bringing. To bear.

Upon. The head. Of the covenant. Breaker. The consequences. That. Have. Been. Declared. Just. As surely. You find. Within. That covenant.

Arrangement. The blessings. That the covenant. Brings. Into the experience. Of the covenant. Keeper. And God. As the God.

Of the covenant. Declare. These. Emphas. There is. There is. A. A. A. Legal. Side.

To it. But. There is also. A relational. Side. To it. And. I think. The. The latter. There. Is more.

[ 16 : 49 ] To the fore. I think. Every element. Is. If you read. Carefully. Through this chapter. And. You have. In your mind. The idea. Of covenant. And God.

Dealing. With Abraham. Bringing. To light. What he has. Already. Instituted. But now. Formalizing it. In a very. Specific.

Way. That you. See. How. Important. The relation. Relational. Aspect. Is. Because. Abraham.

The servant. Of God. Is. Also. The friend. Of God. And I think. It. Comes. To. To light. In the way. That. God.

Speaks. To Abraham. The Lord. Came. Unto Abraham. In a vision. Saying. Fear not. Abraham.

[ 17 : 43 ] I am thy shield. And exceeding. Great reward. And Abraham. Responds. And speaks. To God. A lot. Of discussion.

Takes place. With regard. To this. Interaction. Does God. Speak. To Abraham.

Using. Language. Using words. Is it. Something. Audible. That Abraham. Hears. Or is it.

What we see. Sometimes. And. Come across. The. The experience. That is more. To do with.

A vision. Or a dream. And. The person. Who. Experiences. God's. Words. Rather than. Hear them.

[ 18 : 37 ] Audibly. Audibly. They are coming. To the psyche. And to the heart. Of that person. There is information.

Communicated. There is language. But not. In the sense. In which. We are speaking. One to the other. Now.

Whether that is. Of important. In this case. Or not. What we are told. Is. That. The Lord. God. Spoke. To Abraham. Or. Who came to him.

In a vision. Say. Fear not. And Abraham. Understood. What he was saying. And not only. Did Abraham. Understand. What God. Was saying to him.

He responded. In kind. He spoke. To God. Lord. The Abraham. Said. Lord God. What will thou. Give me. Seeing. I go. Childless.

[ 19 : 31 ] And the steward. Of my house. Is this. Eliezer. Of Damascus. We know. From a reading.

Of Genesis. That this occurrence. Is not the first. In fact. There are three. Previous occurrences. Where God. Is described.

As speaking. To Abraham. In chapter 12. Twice. In chapter 13. Once. Following one. From this. There are a further. Four occurrences.

Where God. Is described. As speaking. To Abraham. And the words. Are understood. By him. And what these words.

Convey to him. Create a response. On the part. Of Abraham. But. I think.

- [ 20 : 24 ] I think. I think. That. Even. In this. Interaction. There is. A particular. Revelation. Of the glory.  
Of God. You might. Think. That it is. Entirely. When we speak. Of God. In his glory.  
That we're speaking. Of. Of. The physical. Aspects. Of the invisible. Gods. Which he is pleased. To reveal. In his.  
Dealings. With men. And women. But. If that is the case. Then. We are limiting.  
The glory of God. To. What. Is entirely. Physical. As. I am sure. That you need. To understand. That. There are.
- [ 21 : 19 ] Elements. To his glory. That are. Communicated. In the way. That he deals. With men. And women. In the way. That he is here. Dealing with Abraham.  
He is coming. To Abraham. Or Abraham. As he is here. And. Speaking. To him. As he would speak.  
To an equal. Almost. Although that is clearly. Not the case. But he is saying. To Abraham. Something. That communicates.  
A supreme. Truth. Arising out of. This relationship. Into which God. Is pleased to enter. With him.  
I. Am thy shield. And thy exceeding. Great reward. God. He recognises. That it is God. That is speaking.
- [ 22 : 15 ] To them. And the way. That God. Spoke to him. Is. Certainly. A. A glimpse.  
Of God's glory. I think. What came to my mind. As I was thinking. Of this. Was. If you remember. When God. Spoke. To Samuel.  
First of all. If you remember. When he was. In Eli's. Home. God. Spoke. To Samuel. And it was.  
On the fourth. Occasion. On the same. Evening. That he was. Able. To discern. The voice. Of God. As being. The voice. Of God.  
Three occasions. He came. To Eli. And he thought. Eli. Was speaking. To him. He did not discern. The voice. Of God. Until.
- [ 23 : 09 ] Eli. Opened his mind. To that. Possibility. But. This was not. True. About Abraham. At this point. Anyway.  
He understood. The voice. Of God. As being. The voice. That spoke. To him. And surely. There is. Significance. In that.  
And there is. Greater. Significance. In the way. That it works out. In this passage. The second thing.  
I think. That. Comes out. Of. This. Communication. Is. The difference. That there is. Between.  
The nature. Of the relationship. That God. Has. Brought him. Into. And anything. We know. Anything. About. For ourselves.
- [ 24 : 08 ] Despite. The one. Speaking. And. I don't. Believe. For one. Minute. That he was. Not. In. Of. God. I don't.  
Believe. For one. Minute. That he was. Anything. Than. Convinced. Of. The divinity. Of. God. And. The. Difference. That there was.  
Between. The divine. And. The creature. And. Yet. There is. A wonder. Attached. To the way.  
That he feels. Free. To respond. To the words. Of God. To him. That he is. Not. Struck. Then. That he is. Not. Silent.

That he. That he is. Not. Filled. Full. Of. Terror. At that. Moment. When God. Declares. To him. These words. That are so. Benevolent.

[ 25 : 01 ] And so. So. Gracious. And yet. There is. This other side. To it. That despite.

What God. Says. To Abraham. Abraham. Is. Not. Content. With what God. Promises. God. God.

Is. Saying. To him. I am. Your shield. And. Your exceeding. Great reward. And then. Abraham. Says. To God. What. Will you.

Give me. Seeing. I go. Childless. It's. As if. Abraham. Is. Not. Able. To. To.

Understand. The significance. Of. What God. Has. Promised. What God. Has. Declared. To him. If God. Says. To you. I am.

[ 26 : 00 ] Yours. Everything. That is. Mine. Is. Yours. You are. You are. You are. Given. My. Protection. You are.

Given. My. Presence. You are. Assured. Of. Wherever. You go. That I will. Be. With. You. And yet. Abraham. Says. What. Will.

You. Give. Me. Seeing. I go. Childless. And the. Steward. Of. My. Houses. The. Selah. Of. Damascus. So.

There is. A mystery. Attached. To. This. Dialogue. There is. A mystery. Attached. To. The. Inability. That. Abraham. Has.

At this. Point. Of. Of. Understanding. The. Significance. Of. God. Speaking. To. Him. And. God.

[ 26 : 52 ] Promising. To. Him. And. His. Own. Predicament. Is. The. One. That. Concerns. The. Most.

Perhaps. He. He. Is. Sarking. Back. To. God's. Previous. Dialogue. With. God's. Previous. Promises.

Again. By. Way. Of. Covenant. That. He. Feels. That. God. Has. Not. Fulfilled. We're. Not. All. That. Behold. To. Me. You.

Have. Given. No. No. Seed. And. Lo. One. In. My. House. Is. My. He. You. Think. Almost. That. He. Is. Accusing. God. And.

The. Only. Thing. He. Can. Accus. God. Of. Is. Not. Fulfilling. His. Promises. To. Him. How.

[ 27 : 49 ] Does. How. Does. That. Configure. When. I. Am. Saying. The. Shackalori. Of. God. Visibly.

Present. In. The. Circumstances. Surrounding. The. Experience. Of. Abraham. And. Yet. Despite. That.

He. Is. Failing. To. Fully. Comprehend. All. That. Is. True. Of. God. Perhaps. If. You. Apply.

To. Yourself. You. Saying. If. God. Were. To. Come. To. Me. In. The. Way. That. He. Came. To. His. Servant. Then. I. Would. Be. No. Doubt. I. Wouldn't. I.

Wouldn't. Argue. With. Him. I. Wouldn't. Question. Him. But. That. Seems. To. Be. What. He. Is. Doing. The.

[ 28 : 44 ] Explanation. Given. For. The. Description. That. He. Gives. Of. His. He. Being. A. Servant. Is. Explained. By.

Various. Commentators. Who. Have. Access. To. Extra. Biblical. Material. That. There. Was. This. Form. Of.

Adoption. That. Took. Place. If. If. If. A. If. A. Family. If. A. Couple. Were. Childless.

And. They. Had. Servants. Then. The. Law. Permitted. Them. To. Formally. Adopt. As.  
It. Were. A. Trusted. Servant. And. Allow. Him. To. Be. The. Heir. Once. The. Time.  
Came. For. That. To. Happen. It.

[ 29 : 41 ] Was. Something. That. Was. Current. It. It. It.

biblical material is available to confirm that. But the Lord says to Abraham that's not going to happen. Whatever your culture allows, whatever your experience is that makes you think this is how it's going to be, this will not happen.

Because he that shall come forth out of thine own bubbles shall be thine heir. And this is what God promised Abraham.

And while Abraham was wanting an heir, God takes him out and shows that his petition was answered in a far more greater way than he could possibly envisage.

Abraham's mind was he wanted a son and heir. But God said, take him out. And he pointed to the heavens and he said to him, count the stars.

[ 31 : 05 ] and if you are able to number them and he said unto them, so shall thy seed be. Do you not see there something that is true about God?

Something that is true about some of our petitions. We say to ourselves, this is all that I'm coming to God with and this is all that God needs to supply and I shall be content.

But God far exceeds the raskings of times. He comes and gives far more than Abraham had solicited.

And he listened to God there. See the difference there is between verse 1 and verse 6. verse 1.

The same God says, I am thy shield and the exceeding great reward. And there is an apparent or a seeming question in the mind of Abraham.

[ 32 : 14 ] Whether God is as great a God in that sense because he wants more than God. But then in verse 6 we read there, he believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness.

And we find the apostles make reference to this promise and make reference to the response that was given by Abraham to it.

what shall we say then that Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh hath found?

For if Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Now to him that worketh is the word not reckoned of grace but of death. Paul believes this experience of Abraham that scripture records for us is an experience that itself speaks of the nature of faith and speaks of the nature of the relationship that exists between the God of the covenant and the son that is his by faith.

[ 33 : 53 ] Surely there is a certain glory attached to the promise. If we don't see it then what else can we say about it?

Is it not an awesome promise given to someone who meets God with an element of dovet in his mind? And then we read that Abraham is told to prepare an offering.

He's commanded to do that. He's given a very specific instruction and he's told to take these animals in verse 9.

Take an heifer of three years old, a she-cut of three years old, a ram of three years old, a turtle dove and a young pigeon. And he kills them and prepares them and he lays them side by side.

He splits the animals apart from the two birds. And he leaves them, which seems strange. God didn't tell him to offer a sacrifice.

[ 35 : 06 ] God was at this moment teaching Abraham something else. So Abraham prepares the beasts and the next step you would ordinarily believe would be for him to offer the sacrifice, which he doesn't do.

And the birds come down and he has to chase the birds away. And then something very strange happens. we read that Abraham in verse 12, when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham and lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon.

What is it that we are meant to make of that? The circumstances have been dictated by God.

A sacrifice has been prepared. And now the sacrifice is to be offered. Some of the commentators direct us to the cross, direct us to the time before the sacrifice offered by Christ came to be offered.

When he was in the garden, when he had with him his disciples, when he commanded them to stay awake and to pray with him a while.

[ 36 : 37 ] But the night was so heavily oppressive that they fell asleep. And some would say this is but a symbolic preparatory image of what we see in the New Testament.

happened. The night and the dark of the night, what God was going to do by way of sacrifice was so stupendous and so awesome that Abraham physically was not able to deal with it.

And yet God spoke to Abraham through this because we read again, he said unto Abraham, know of assurity that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them and shall afflict them four hundred years.

And what God was going to teach Abraham was that there is a sense in which what we read here is a reminder to us of how God's promise will be fulfilled in God's time.

That there is no rush with God's promises. That there is the idea that God has said and that God would do instantly his own idea and not his.

[ 38 : 14 ] God's promise of a redeemer was given long before the redeemer came to sight. Here he is telling this is what's going to happen with regard to Israel.

Israel is going to be taken into bondage. But God says, he tells them that this is going to take so long, four hundred years, a generation is a hundred years.

The nation whom they shall send will I judge and afterwards shall they come out with great substance. And you shall go to thy fathers in peace and there shall be God buried in good old days.

But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again. What was that pointing to? It was something about a generation of people when Abraham was in the first instance saying, I have no seed.

seed. He had no one to call a descendant and yet God was saying to him, not only will you have a seed, this will be a seed that will be without number, but this will be true of them.

[ 39 : 36 ] And beyond that there will be more that will come to light later on. the divine John Owen adds to our understanding of this, he says, concerning the way that God dealt with Abraham and the way that he dealt with the sacrifice that Abraham was asked to prepare, that God was teaching Abraham not only that God's time was not like his time, but it was also true, it was to let Abraham know, Owen says, that there was a furnace of affliction attending the covenant of grace and peace.



And so he tells Zion that he chose her in the furnace of affliction. And Owen quotes from Isaiah chapter 48, for my name's sake will I defer my anger and for my praise will I refrain for thee.

that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee but not with silver. I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction for mine own sake.

Even for mine own sake will I do it. For how should my name be polluted and I will not give my glory to another. Now one clearly sees Israel there as Israel who will experience persecution and experience the griefs and the sorrows that God's chosen people will have by reason of the relationship that they have with him.

But there is also this side to it because what we see here is a demonstration on the part of God of the holiness of the covenant.

[ 41 : 38 ] And the covenant is his covenant and he doesn't give it to Abraham to offer the sacrifice. He himself comes and he passes through the parts of the split beasts as he is described there as a smoking furnace.

and a burning lamp passing between those pieces. So that the emphasis in the revelation of this sacrifice that is entirely to do with God's covenant and the parties to the covenant namely God himself is both parties of the covenant.

In a covenant that was established between two parties there was always this sign to it you will do this and if you do it you will receive blessing.

Fail to do this and you will suffer the consequences. The split beasts and the burning of the bodies spoke of the wrath that would come on a breach of covenant.

God is here describing the provision that he was making that was disclosed in the covenant that he himself was the covenant that he upheld the covenant it was his covenant and he was the God and he was the one doing the offering and he was the sacrifice and we know that from the fulfilment of it in the New Testament.

[ 43 : 29 ] Although Abraham sleeps initially God speaks to him again by way of vision and he is given given this promise and undertaking God's presence is made known to Abraham in such a way that he is in no doubt as to who is doing what and why.

There is an explanation given to it and surely there we see once again the provision that God is making enhancing in our sight aspects to his glory that would otherwise be kept here.

see how Paul when he writes to the Galatian church he knows that that what what God was doing there that he meant those who were eyewitness to it were meant to understand what he was doing.

Just read through Galatians chapter 4 and in that the previous chapter chapter chapter 3 speaks of the covenantal relationship that there is brought to our attention there.

Even as Abraham believed God it was accounted to him for righteousness know ye therefore that they which are of faith the same as the children of Abraham and the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the gospel and to Abraham saying in thee shall all nations be blessed.

[ 45 : 34 ] Is there a glory in the gospel? Surely it is because it is the gospel of free grace that it is God's purpose to save sinners by way of Christ Jesus.

Is there not a glory there that we can contemplate and marvel at that God so meticulously brings his purposes to our attention through his dealings with his servant.

May God bless to us these few thoughts. Let us pray. Oh Lord oh God we see even in the experiences of one who is the father of the faithful spoken of within you world in that way that his life is often shown to be flawed in many respects and yet you catered for his weaknesses and you brought him into close proximity to yourself and you spoke to him and you spoke to him verbally and you spoke to him by way of vision and you spoke to him through the symbols that he often had to come face to face with and be reminded of the fact that you the God of heaven would find a lamb for yourself and that he was bound up in you will for the salvation of sinners we pray for your blessing upon our meditations on your truth and pardon our sins in

Jesus name Amen I'm going to conclude singing some verses in Gaelic from Psalm 66  
Psalm 66 at the end of the psalm hick a s e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e m b e e e e  
e e e

Thank you.

[ 48 : 59 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 51 : 41 ] Thank you. Thank you. Amen.