

Unveiling Glory and Unleashing Hostility – Part II
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John 8:45-59
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 8. We're turning to the passage we began to look at last week, Verses 45 to 59. We noted how in these verses the spotlight shifts from the crowd to Jesus. There's a sense in which there's a movement back and forth, but essentially the focus in these verses is distinct from the focus in the 15 preceding verses. From Verse 30 to Verse 44, those 15 verses were about the crowd. It was about those Jews who professed faith in Christ, and Jesus is exposing and dealing with the issue of what their essential character is, who their father is, what their motives are, and what their heart is like.

Then in Verse 45, the spotlight shifts to Jesus, and now the focus is not on their father, but His Father, and not on their character, but His character, and He continues to show us their character, but by really the process of unveiling His glory.

We titled this series of messages here in this passage: *Unveiling Glory and Unleashing Hostility*, because what happens in the passage is that as Jesus exposes to clear view who He is, as He speaks with greater and greater clarity to reveal the holiness of His Person, the majesty of His character, what happens is not glad submission, but intense hatred, and we see in it exactly the confirmation of what He told us in the previous section, Verses 30 to 45, was that the issue is that we are of our father the devil. We are children of the devil until God's grace awakens our hearts. God has to change us. He has to take out the heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh. We need a heart operation in the truest sense of the word.

So what we looked at last week was that in these verses from Verse 45 to Verse 59, Jesus begins displaying the facets of His glory. I mentioned that there are really seven facets of His glory, attributes of who He is, seven of them, unveiled in these 15 verses. We looked at the first last week, *Jesus is Truth*, and we're going to look at the next two, Lord willing, this morning.

Begin reading with me at Verse 45 of John 8:

John 8:45-59

45 But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.” 48 The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.”

52 The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never see death.’ 53 Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?”

54 Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’; 55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”

57 So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

Let’s pray together...

Our Father, we come to Your Word with gratitude and also with a sense of inadequacy, grateful that You have spoken, but realizing that we remain dependent upon grace. We ask that Your Holy Spirit might take these words which He inspired and now illuminate them in our hearts. We pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

We saw how in the passage last time, I shared with you how as Jesus shares more of who He is, the spotlight’s on Jesus, but there are brief moments back where we go to the crowd, and what we see with the crowd is that each moment, they become more and more hostile.

First they ask Him, “Do you have a demon?” Then He speaks some more and unveils some more of His glory, and then they say, “We know you have a demon,” and He reveals His glory some more, and they pick up stones to kill Him. This is what happens when God unveils His glory, when Jesus reveals who He is. The unbelieving heart hates God, because the unbelieving heart wants to *be* God. So we come face to face with the reality that we are in great need of God to do something that only He can do, which is change our hearts. But the wonderful thing is that though we don’t see all that’s going on, we know that the majority of people who saw the unveiling of His glory grew in opposition, and we also know that there were some in the crowd who were repenting and believing, some in the crowd, who, as they saw His glory, God changed their hearts. Nicodemus was probably one of those in the crowd who later is asking for the body of Jesus after He is crucified, and who became a follower of Jesus Christ, by God’s grace. Nicodemus was the man who had been blind. So what we need to see, and this is what the world needs to see, is the glory of God.

Now, we have to watch out for our own logic and reason, because if it really is true that unveiling glory increases hostility, why would you want to share Christ, right? You’re just going to make unbelievers hate Him more and hate you. Well, the main reason you want to share Christ is because you’re called to do so to glorify God. It’s not about the results. It’s not about the impact to you or to me. It’s about the impact to God. He is worthy to be praised, and the greatest tragedy in the world is that people aren’t praising Him. That’s the greatest tragedy. It’s not the lostness of their souls. That’s a tragedy. That is a great tragedy. That’s an enormous tragedy, but the greater tragedy is that God is not honored. Christ is not worshiped. That is the greatest tragedy. So when you or I lift Him up, we are fulfilling the obligation that every human being has, which is to lift up His glory, to magnify Him, and we’re to do it just for the glory of God.

Now, at the same time, to those that we speak to, sometimes hostility will increase, but it’s their only hope. Secondarily, it’s the only hope of the lost that you lift up Christ, for in lifting up Christ, God works through that to bring them to Himself. So though it may cost us greatly, it has the opportunity to bring them that which is most precious. It’s like the song we sang earlier. I love the theology in the song *How Sweet and Awful is the Place*, by Isaac Watts.

*“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”*

The reality is that God uses the preaching of the Word, the proclamation of Jesus Christ. His Spirit attends it where He is willing, and He changes hearts. People don't get born again in a vacuum. 1 Peter makes clear that you are born again not of perishable seed but of the imperishable seed of the living and abiding Word of God. So it's the proclamation of the Word that brings it about. God uses that means to make somebody alive.

Now, this morning we want to continue to look at the unveiling of the glory of Jesus Christ, because it not only saves us, but it is what satisfies us. There is nothing that's more wonderful than lifting up Christ and seeing Him in His majesty. We saw last week that Jesus is truth. He is the supreme expression of truth. Today we want to look at two other attributes. We see in this passage that Jesus is holy, and also that Jesus is meek. Actually, there's an amazing paradox about that: Holiness and meekness.

1) Jesus is Holy:

John 8:46 ~ Which one of you convicts Me of sin? ...

He asks the question to the crowd. Knowing of their growing hostility, He is revealing His glory to save some there in the crowd. "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" He's saying, "Look, how do you judge whether I'm true or not? Look at My character. Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" In fact, He told us this is actually the test of false teachers. Jesus says this in Matthew 7 in the Sermon on the Mount. "How do you know a false teacher? You look at their fruit, the fruit of their life." If you read 2 Peter and Jude, you'll see the characterizations of false teachers, and in Paul's letter to Titus you'll see it as well. It's their character. So He says, "Look at My character, and in doing this, which one of you convicts Me of sin?" The NIV reads, "Can any of you prove Me guilty of sin?" He's unveiling the glory of His essential character. He's disclosing the fullness and majesty of His person.

One aspect of His character that completely sets Him apart from every other man who has ever lived is His utter sinlessness. He never sinned. In fact, this is what He'd actually been saying throughout His ministry. He'd been saying this earlier in this same discussion. In John 8:29, He said the same thing in a different way, in a positive way, rather than a negative way. "Who can convict me of sin? Look at Verse 29. He's speaking to the same crowd:

John 8:29 ~ And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

Jesus' character is to always do the things that are pleasing to God. Always. In John 4:34, He told the disciples, "My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him who sent Me." There's never been a man like Jesus. Now, I want us to think about His holiness, and one of the things that I think is He's basically asking is for them to testify against Him. This whole letter, the whole Gospel and this passage in particular, has kind of a legal and forensic character. John is trying to prove an assertion. The assertion is Jesus is the Son of God, and you need to believe that so that you can have life in His Name. The whole Gospel makes this case, and he brings testimony, after testimony, after testimony, and here you have the same thing.

When we looked at it earlier in Chapter 8, there's this legal language. They say, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." Jesus says, "My testimony is true." He's asserting testimony after testimony. See, it's legal language. What you have here is He's asking for testimony from His enemies. He's asking for testimony from the crowd. "Who would like to give testimony against Me?"

So I want us to think about the testimony of Jesus' holiness, the testimony that confirms His holiness, and I want to start, though, not with the crowd, but with Christ Himself, because He's implicitly testifying to His own sinlessness right here. "Which one of you can convict Me of sin? It's impossible to convict Me of sin. I am sinless." In fact, He says the same thing in John 14:30. That's the night before He was crucified, and He tells the disciples, "I'm about to leave this world, and the prince of darkness has nothing in Me. He has nothing that He can lay hold of on Me." Christ's testimony is that He is sinless. Now, let's think for a moment about the testimony of His friends. There are three sub points: The testimony of Christ, the testimony of His friends, the testimony of His enemies.

a) The Testimony of Christ: We have the testimony of Christ here in the verse:

John 8:46 ~ Which one of you convicts Me of sin? ...

We also have the testimony of Christ in Verse 29:

John 8:29 ~ ...for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

b) The Testimony of His Friends: John Stott, in his book *Basic Christianity*, makes a wonderful point when he's talking about the testimony to Jesus' character by His friends. Listen to what Stott says. He talks about the apostles. What is their testimony about who Jesus is? How valid is it? Listen to what he says:

They lived in close contact with Jesus for about three years. They ate together. They slept together. They experienced the cramped neighborliness of the same boat.

Now, think about that. They were together all the time in more pleasant circumstances, and in less pleasant circumstances.

They even had a common purse, and a common bank account can be a fruitful cause of dissension. The disciples got on one another's nerves. They quarreled, but they never found in Jesus the sins they found in themselves. Familiarity normally breeds contempt, but not in this case. Two of the chief witnesses to the sinlessness of Christ are Peter and John. They are part of His inner group – Peter, James and John – the three who always had the special privileges of being with Jesus at particular moments.

What is their testimony? This is what they say. Peter first describes Jesus as *a Lamb without blemish or spot*, in 1 Peter 1:19. Then he says that *He committed no sin nor was guile found on His lips*, in 1 Peter 2:22. John roundly declares that men are sinners, that if we say we have no sin or that we have not sinned, we are both liars and we make God a liar, too. But he goes on in his epistle to say this about Christ:

1 John 3:5 ~ And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him there is no sin.

The testimony of Paul the apostle:

2 Corinthians 5:21 ~ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf,...

The author of Hebrews says in Chapter 4:15:

Hebrews 4:15 ~ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 9:13-14 ~ For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The testimony of Scripture is clear. Those who knew Jesus the best were convinced: *He is without sin. He is completely set apart. He is Holy.*

c) The Testimony of His Enemies: In John 8:46, when He asks, “Which one of you convicts Me of sin?” isn’t the silence deafening? “Which one of you convicts Me of sin? Here’s your opportunity right now. I’ve just alluded to the crowd to the fact that if you can convict Me of sin, you can end My ministry.” What do they do? They had nothing to say. They changed the subject.

John 8:48 ~ The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

This is an ad hominem attack. When you don’t have any case, what you do is you attack the person, and that’s what they do, because they have nothing to say. I mean, they’ve been on a fact-finding mission since the very beginning. They’re always trying to trip Him up. Read the Gospels. They’re always trying to turn things around on Him, find a way to expose the fact that He’s a sinner and that He’s not worthy to be followed.

In fact, we find that at the end of Jesus’ ministry, the Pharisees and chief priests are willing even to bribe people to make false accusations against Christ. It’s really profound that in that attempt to find – remember they arrest Him? Judas betrays Him in the Garden, and they have Him brought before the Sanhedrin, and they’re trying to find somebody that can bring up a charge. The only charge they have is that somebody says they heard Him say that He would destroy the temple, and in three days rebuild it.

Now, He didn’t say He would destroy the temple, if you remember. He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it.” He was speaking of a greater temple than the temple He was standing in front of. He was talking about the temple of His body, which really is the temple, because the temple is what? It’s not a building. The temple throughout the Scripture is the place where the glory dwells. Where did the glory dwell when Jesus came? In John 1:14, he says:

John 1:14 ~ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

He's saying, "We beheld His glory. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, tabernacled among us, literally pitched His tent among us, and we beheld His glory." John's picking up all that Old Testament imagery of the tabernacle. When Moses would put the tent up, they put the tent up exactly according to God's specifications, and the glory cloud dwelt over the tent. He says, "Now we have seen God made flesh, and we have beheld His glory." The Shekinah glory cloud is on a man Jesus Christ.

So all they could come up with in this all-out campaign to smear His character was that He claimed that He could raise the temple, and in fact, when you read on through, what do they end up sentencing Him to death for? The sin of blasphemy. The sin of blasphemy is to claim or to speak against God in some way, and they were claiming that He was speaking against God by saying He was God. They knew in their hearts He wasn't blaspheming, but rather speaking the truth. He was saying He was God, because He *is* God.

In fact, I want to show you one of the things that is really wonderful about the New Testament. In fact, it's one of the things that John Stott mentions, which is that there are some testimonies, some aspects of truth, that are so fundamentally true that you don't even have to hardly call attention to them. They're just assumed, and he talks about in his book *Basic Christianity* that this is the testimony of the apostles. They never really set out to say, "Hey, He was sinless," because they didn't need to. They say it as an aside always, because it was so clearly true. Anyone around Him knew it. Everything about Him was holiness. It was unthinkable to ascribe sin to Him.

Those men who had spent all that time with Him in the boat – good times, bad times – circumstantially they said, "He is God," and they just bring it up naturally. But you also have the Gospel writers' record for us the accounting of those who would have been His enemies, and it's really something. Watch this. Turn with me to Luke 23, in fact, over to the Gospel immediately before John, and look how careful the authors of Scripture, the Holy Spirit inspiring the Word is, to record for us how people saw Jesus' holiness. Again, it just comes out matter-of-factly as you read the narrative, but it's beautiful to behold.

In Luke 23:22, Jesus had been before Pilate and he wanted to release Jesus. In Verse 20, it says:

Luke 23:20-22 ~ Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, 21 but they kept on calling out, saying, “Crucify, crucify Him!” 22 And he said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him.”

Look with me at Verse 41. Remember, Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One of the other Gospels tells us that initially they were both hurling insults at Him. This Gospel tells us that later on, during the time of Jesus hanging on the cross – He hung on the cross for the better part of six hours – that one of the thieves has a change of heart about Him. Look what he says in Verse 40:

Luke 23:40-41 ~ But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”

There’s Pilate’s testimony, the thief on the cross, and then look down at Verse 47, after Jesus breathes His last breath in Verse 46. The centurion is the Roman soldier that’s been overseeing everything. He’s just beheld Jesus die. He’s been overseeing the process of this six-hour agony, and what does he say in Verse 47?

Luke 23:47 ~ Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent.”

In fact, back over to John, it’s really instructive how John records for us all the details around Pilate’s evaluation of Jesus. In John 18:29-30, right after they brought Jesus to Pilate, the Bible says:

John 18:29-30 ~ Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this Man?” 30 They answered and said to him, “If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you.”

Pilate says, “Why have you brought Him to me?” They say, “Hey, He’s an evildoer. Take our word for it.” Then you have Pilate do his own investigation. He

goes in and talks to Jesus, and look what he concludes in Verse 38. He comes out after talking to Jesus:

John 18:38-39 ~ ...And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him. 39 But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?"

He's saying, "Why don't you have me release Him? You've arrested Him, but I find no guilt in Him. Why don't I release Him?" He wants to release Him.

John 18:40 ~ So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

John 19:1-6 ~ Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. 2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; 3 and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face. 4 Pilate came out again and *said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." 5 Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate *said to them, "Behold, the Man!" 6 So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate *said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."

Now, do you see that? Three times we see the exact same statement from Pontius Pilate: "I find no guilt in Him. I find no guilt in Him. I find no guilt in Him." Pilate is representing the Emperor of Rome. He is Rome standing here testifying. The greatest nation on the face of the earth, the highest legal power is saying about Jesus Christ, "I find no guilt in Him." God ordained that the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, and the Father willed Pilate to say that once, twice, three times: *There is no guilt in this man. There is no basis of accusation.* In fact, Hebrews 7:26 is perhaps one of the most beautiful pictures of Jesus' sinlessness in all of Scripture. Listen to these words. Look at how he describes Jesus:

Hebrews 7:26 ~ For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

You see Jesus Christ? He stands apart from every other human being. He alone is holy. He alone is innocent. He alone is undefiled. He is completely separated from sinners, cut off of a different cut from every other person on the face of the earth. That last word *exalted above the heavens* is the idea of holiness. The reason I chose *holiness* when He said, “Does any of you convict me of sin?” is because He’s pointing out this attribute of Himself that is an attribute of God, and God’s holiness is not just moral purity. It is that sinlessness, yes, but it’s the idea of separateness. He is completely separate and distinct. Jesus is like no other. There has never been a man like Jesus – holy, innocent and exalted. The disciples saw in His purity the fact that He was God: high and lifted up.

2) Jesus is Meek:

Then back to John 8, now. The amazing paradox is that the next thing we see in John 8 after we see His holiness, is we see His meekness. Look with me as the narrative continues to unfold. Jesus said:

John 8:46-49 ~ Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.” 48 The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?” 49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.

Then He says this in Verse 50:

John 8:50 ~ But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

An astounding characteristic of Jesus is that this is something that defines His essential character. He does not seek His own glory, and He points out that it’s the Father who seeks His glory. Look at Verse 54. It says the same thing. Later on just right after they reply to Him, He says:

John 8:54 ~ ...“If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing;...

“It’s not My nature to glorify Myself, but...” What does He say?

...it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’;

His holiness, the idea of holiness in the Bible, means set apart, but it means transcendent. It means to be completely above. It means to be of a different order entirely. God's holiness is His transcendent majesty that makes Him distinct from everything else. Everything that He's made, God sustains it all. He holds it all together, but He is as far from it intrinsically as the farthest star is from this earth, but a billion times over. This is why pantheism, the idea that God IS everything, is such an evil, wicked thing. The creation is not the Creator. It reflects the Creator, but it is not the Creator. He is completely separate, exalted high above the heavens. This is why the idea of God's essential attribute is His holiness.

I think R. C. Sproul was right when he said it is His quintessential attribute. His holiness really defines everything else about Him. You could say that for every other attribute of God, you could put *holy* in front of it. His justice is His holy justice. His love is His holy love. It's the only attribute that He has given that three-fold echo – remember in Isaiah 6 what the seraphim say when they look at the Lord? I mean, think of all the things they could say about God, all the wonderful attributes of God. They could talk about His power, His knowledge, His wisdom, His goodness, His love, but what do they say? “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. The whole earth is full of His glory.” He's holy, set apart, transcendent, and Isaiah's life is transformed by that, and his message becomes filled with the references to God's holiness.

For him, God is the holy One of Israel. There are like 34 times in the Old Testament that *holy One of Israel* is used, and 30 of them are in Isaiah. Why? Isaiah saw God's holiness with his own eyes. He saw the train of His robe filling the temple. He felt the earth quake. He saw the seraphim. Remember they had six wings? You would think they could fly really fast. They didn't have six wings so they could fly really fast. They had six wings because they needed four of them just to protect them from God's holiness. With two of them they flew, but with two of them they covered their eyes, and with two of them they covered their feet, because the central thing about God is He is holy and we are not. The seraphim are not holy like He is. Now, we can be holy in a secondary way. When we give ourselves to Him, we become set apart unto Him, but we never become Him. He is infinitely distant in that sense. So when we see then John pointing out to us Pilate, saying, “There is no guilt in Him. There is no guilt in Him. There is no guilt in Him,” do you see that? “Holy, holy, holy.”

In fact, John makes it really clear. You can look at this later. In John 12:40 and following, he quotes Isaiah twice. He said, “Remember when Isaiah said, ‘Who has believed our report?’” He says right after that, “The reason Isaiah said this was

because he saw His glory.” John is saying that Isaiah saw Jesus’ glory, when you read the passage. That’s why Jehovah’s Witnesses are so terribly, awfully wrong. Jesus IS Yahweh. Jesus IS the Lord. He’s not some secondary being. No, He is Himself God. He is exalted above the heavens, and now the reality is that, and this is where they stumble: He is meek. This holy One is meek. He says, “I do not glorify Myself.” His whole life was lived to glorify the Father. He said, “I honor the Father. You dishonor Me. My whole life is about honoring the Father, honoring the Father.” He says, “The works you see Me do are not My works. The works that you see Me do are the Father’s works within Me. The words that you hear Me say are not My words. I say what the Father tells me to say.” He lived a life of complete dependence. There is within the Godhead this sense of meekness. And remember what Jesus said? “If you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father.” What did He say about His own character?

Matthew 11:28-30 ~ “Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

This is such a treasure. His meekness is so very important. “Come unto Me, you who are weary and heavy-laden. I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.” Why? “For I am gentle and humble,” the text says. “I am meek and lowly.” Gentle means meek. Humble literally means lowly. God is meek and lowly, and because He is, you can come to Him even though He is transcendent in His holiness, and though He is so great that the Psalmist says, “When I behold the heavens, the work of Your hands, and I just look at the stars, I think what is man that you take thought of him, or the son of man that you notice him? How can it be? You are so great.” The Psalmist even sees, though you are that great, yet You have crowned man with glory. There’s something about You. Though You are that great, yet You have stooped down.

Spurgeon, in one of his sermons, says about the Lord Jesus Christ and His meekness, “Think about it, that God would come down to man.” He said, “God has to bend over to see the heavens. God has to bow down to see what angels are doing, and He comes all the way down and lives among us.” That is who God is. Jesus said, “If you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father.” And there is this sense in the Trinity that though there’s clearly an order of authority, there’s a sense in which they’re always giving praise to one another, loving one another, lifting up one another.

You see Jesus say about the Father, “The works that I’m doing, give the Father the glory,” and then Jesus says to the believers about the Spirit, “It’s good for you that I go away. This is a good thing, because if I go, then you get the Spirit, and you need the Spirit. You want the Spirit.” And what does the Spirit do when He comes? The Spirit is self-effacing. He doesn’t call attention to Himself. What does He do? He says, “Look at Jesus. Look at Jesus. Look at Jesus.” What does the Father do? He says, “Look at My Son. This is My Son.” He gives His Son the Name that’s above every name.

There’s this sense in which the Triune God, infinite in majesty, there is this amazing and beautiful meekness about God. It is counterintuitive, because you and I are the opposite of meekness. Sin in us is the opposite of lowliness. Sin exalts self. Meekness is when you release your rights and you gladly yield, because of an inner disposition of heart. That’s why gentleness isn’t always the best translation. Gentleness is the outside of meekness. The inside of meekness is an inner disposition of a heart of surrender, laying it down. Jesus is like that. He is meek. Paul says:

Philippians 2:5-8 ~ Have this mind in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ...

He didn’t come into this world saying, “Notice Me. Honor Me.” No, He came not to be served, but to take upon Himself the form of a servant. He came to serve. How can that be? How can it be that One so great can come and do the most menial service? That’s what Paul is saying. “Do you not see? He left the glory of Heaven and He came all the way down, and He took upon Himself the form of a servant.”

Philippians 2:7-8 ~ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

He humbled Himself all the way down to death, but even beyond that, even the death on a cross. He became a curse for us. He who was blessed forever, who should be blessed and praised, became a curse. This is who Jesus Christ is. His transcendence, His majesty, is accompanied by this incredible meekness.

I want to look back at this combination for a moment with one other thing that you see in the passage related to His meekness that hits both of these points. The Jews ask a question. It's important to look at their questions, because the questions keep framing what God wants us to see. The question they ask in Verse 52 is:

John 8:52 ~ ...Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'

And here comes the question:

John 8:53 ~ Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? ...

Now, they're making a kind of a statement, but it's a question, but it's a mocking question. "You're not greater than our father Abraham who died?" But they do ask the question. They raise a question which is a great question.

John 8:53 ~ Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

This is one of the themes that John has going on in his book as well, this idea of *are you greater than*. "You're not greater than our father Abraham, are You?" And of course, the answer is, "Yes." It's an emphatic, "Yes, Abraham longed to see My day. Before Abraham was, I AM." But you also had the same kind of question, interestingly enough, earlier in the Gospel. Do you remember who asked a question like that? "You are not greater than our father...?" In John 4:12, Jesus was talking to the woman at the well, and He said to her:

John 4:10 ~ ... "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

Remember, He asked the woman for a drink, and she first of all says, "What are You doing asking me for a drink? I'm a Samaritan and You're a Jew," and Jesus says, "Really, that's not the issue about Me being a Jew and you being a Samaritan. The issue is that I'm asking you for water when I'm the one who has living water." And she says in Verse 12:

John 4:12 ~ You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"

“Are you greater than Jacob? He gave us this well.” Jesus said, “Yeah, I’m a lot greater than Jacob. I give you Living Water. Everyone who drinks of this well will thirst again, but the water that I will give you will become a fountain inside of you.” And then, “Are you greater than Abraham?” I mean, he was our great father of the faith. Look at the faith that he had. Look at how he lived. Look at Abraham’s life. I mean, he was great, but he wasn’t that great. In reality, he was wicked. He was just a man touched by grace. “Are you greater than our father Abraham?” Jesus is saying, “Absolutely.”

You also have this sense, though it’s not voiced exactly this way, but you have in the passage another kind of a comparison. Jesus is greater than John the Baptist. He points this out earlier in the Gospel, that you had John the Baptist and he had a great witness, but Jesus says, “The witness that I have is greater than the witness of John.” Greater than, greater than, greater than. He’s greater than Abraham. He’s greater than Jacob. He’s greater than John the Baptist.

Now, think about who John the Baptist is. That kind of answers the question. Remember it said, “Are you greater than Abraham? Are you greater than the prophets? You’re not greater than Abraham? You’re not greater than the prophets?” Jesus is saying, “Yes and yes.” John’s Gospel has made this abundantly clear, because we learn in the New Testament that who is the greatest prophet of all time? Think about that question for a moment. Think about how you would answer: Who was the greatest prophet of all time?

Now, I think some great guesses would be Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah. We talked about him a moment ago. But who does God say is the greatest prophet of all time? In Matthew 11:11, Jesus says that the greatest prophet of all time was John the Baptist. He says that of among those born of women, there is not one greater than John. He’s the greatest. There’s no one greater than John. Moses and Elijah? Sorry. John is ahead of you. Now what does John the Baptist say about his station relative to Jesus? In John 1:15, he makes this real clear in his Gospel. He’s talking about John the Baptist saying this:

John 1:15 ~ John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”

John 1:30 ~ This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’

John 1:27 ~ It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”

John the Baptist wouldn't have said he was the greatest prophet, probably, because he wouldn't even acknowledge he was in the spirit of Elijah. He was a humble man too. He was an amazing man of God, but the Bible says and John says, "Look, I can tell you this: Jesus is so much greater than me that I'm not worthy to untie His sandal. I'm not worthy to touch His shoe. I can't imagine touching the shoe of this One. So much greater is He. Such majesty. Such holiness." Remember when He came to John to baptize Him? John's like, No way. I can't baptize You. You should baptize me." Jesus said, "It's necessary to fulfill all righteousness. I know that you're right. You would think that, but you don't understand why I've come. I've come to identify with sinners. I've come from the highest heights of glory. I've come all the way down to be treated as if I were sin." John says, "I could not untie His sandal. I should not touch the bottom of His shoe."

Think about what John the apostle tells us about in John 13, the only Gospel writer who records for us what Jesus did on the night before He was crucified, the One of transcendent majesty. What did He do on the night before He was crucified? When they went into the upper room for the Lord's Supper, He took water and put it in a pot, He took off His outer robes, and He did something that most slaves in Roman society would not do. In fact, it's the kind of thing that if somebody forgot to wash the feet, the slave would say, "I'm sorry. I can't do that. I've been around too long. I have too much seniority. This is not in my contract. Even though I know I'm a slave, I can't do that." The lowest of the household washes the feet.

Jesus Himself, robed in incredible holiness and splendor, takes the towel about Him and girds Himself as the lowest slave, and washes their feet. John says, "I can't touch His sandal." Jesus says, "You shouldn't be able to, but I'm going to wash your feet." That's majesty and meekness together. Isn't that amazing? That's who God is. God is Himself so marvelous, and yet He's so humble. That's how we can be saved. He comes into this world and He is treated as if He lived our filthy, wicked lives. He takes our sin upon Himself, He bears it hanging on the cross, and He takes our guilt and our punishment, the wrath of God. He swallows it up in Himself, and He drinks all of it down until He can finally say, "It is finished. Paid in full." He gives up His Spirit to the Father and the Father says, "Yes, I accept that offering. You are a spotless Lamb, perfectly holy, and I take that offering, and I apply it, and I take away the sins of everyone who will ever believe." He took our sins out of the way. He nailed them to the cross. He finished with them forever.

Not only that, but He gives us a perfect righteousness, and now He says, “Come and be My children. I don’t call you slaves. I call you friends. You are My friends.” Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us that we should be called the sons of God, we who come into the Kingdom by humbling ourselves. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek. That’s the order. Poor in spirit, mourn for your sin, meek. The meek inherit the earth. God is going to, in glory, glorify every true child of God. He uses that word *glorify*.

We disown ourselves and we come to Jesus and say, “We’re nothing. You’re everything.” He says, “Now you’re My sons. You’re My daughters. You’re My children,” and the whole earth and creation is waiting for the revelation of the sons of God, the day when He glorifies us. He gives us a crown and we stand beside Him. We’ve done nothing, but it’s the nature of God to exalt that which was low, to lift it up, to pull it into Himself, and to glory in His matchless majesty and grace.

A God who is that meek, why would you not go to Him? A God who is that humble and lowly, why would you not go to Him? And if you won’t go to Him, you will experience His wrath, because He’s also holy. He will punish sin, but He’s made a way to punish your sins in Himself, and He says, “Come. Come unto Me, you who are weary and heavy-laden. You’re tired. You’re worn out. This world is so hard. You’re trying to produce your own righteousness. Forget it. Come unto Me. I am gentle and lowly of heart. I will give you salvation. Give yourself to Me and you will find everything.” We have to keep looking at Jesus so we become more like Him. May God help us do that.

Let’s pray...

Our Father, we thank You for revealing Yourself through the Lord Jesus Christ. We stand in awe of You. Lord, when we see what You’re like, our minds are overwhelmed, our hearts burst. We can’t grapple with these things, Lord. We find ourselves out of our depth. We just stand in awe and we worship You. Lord, we pray that You would shine the light of Your truth into every heart and help us to truly respond to You the way that You deserve to be responded to – complete surrender, total and complete adoration. You deserve everything that we are. You deserve it for creating us, but Lord, when we think about what You’ve done for us, You deserve it a million times over. There is no way we can respond that’s commensurate to what You’ve done for us. We’re so grateful, Lord, though, that you have done it.

We pray for those that have not, who in this room even now are holding out, resisting You, resisting such amazing love and condescension. God, break their hearts now. Break their wills now. Let them see that what they're holding onto is nothing but death and emptiness, and what they're resisting is life and love and fullness. Open their eyes, Lord. Grant them life. For Your sake and Your glory, we pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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