

Guard Your Glory

✖ The

indwelling presence of our glorious Lord makes the Christian life supernatural. We must cherish this glory always and never exchange it for empty promises of human approval and reward.

In the days of Jeremiah the prophet, the Lord called His people Israel to account because they did not “guard their glory.” Although they started out devoted to the Lord, they turned away from Him and began to follow other gods. God spoke to them about this through Jeremiah. “I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, the love of your betrothals, your following after Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first of His harvest” (Jer. 2:2-3, NASB).

Clearly, God was pleased with Israel’s initial condition. But then something happened. He said: “‘What injustice did your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me and walked after emptiness and became empty?...Has a nation changed gods, when they were not gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit’” (Jer. 2:5,11).

God did not say the people changed His glory for that which does not profit—He said their glory. There's a difference.

He goes on to say that His people committed two evils: “‘They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water’” (Jer. 2: 13). In other words, they turned away from God to follow false gods that could not give them life.

God voiced a similar complaint to Moses when his brother Aaron decided Moses had been up on the mountain too long. Possibly fearing that Moses had died, Aaron ordered God's people to fashion a golden calf to worship.

King David recounts the story: “They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped a molten image. Thus they exchanged their glory for the image of an ox that eats grass” (Ps. 106:19-20).

Once again, the Word speaks of their glory.

The Hebrew Old Testament word for “glory” (kabod) carries the idea of “weighty,” meaning “impressive.”

Similarly, the New Testament Greek word for “glory” (doxa) derives from the verb dokeo, meaning to mentally estimate or value. Doxa, then, is an estimation, a valuation. Glory is the value we place on something. If I

lose my own glory, other people put a low estimate or value on me.

God's

glory is different because it's His unchanging essence—it's an object,

it's "out there" whether people value Him or not. To give proper glory

to God is to ascribe infinite value to Him, to value Him as worthy of

infinite praise because He glorifies Himself (see Ezek. 39:13).

The

glory of man is the original condition in which God created him. And

what is that? Genesis 1:26 says God made man (both male and female) in

His own image. In our original condition, we reflected God's image. If

anyone wanted to see God on earth, he could look at another person. Paul

says, "[Man]...is the image and glory of God" (1 Cor. 11:7).

FALLING SHORT OF THE GLORY

We

lost this image and glory in the fall, but Jesus recovered both for us

when He died for our sins and rose for our justification (see Rom.

4:25). Over the course of our new life in Christ we are transformed into

Jesus' perfect image (see Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10) and glory (see 2 Cor.

3:18). Guarding my glory means I guard the image of Christ—the perfect

image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15)— inside me.

In

summary, our original glory was our original creation. We distorted that beautiful, radiant image and glory when we sinned. God graciously recreates that image and glory when He rebirths us. Then as we guard our glory by walking in obedience to God and His Word, we're transformed more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." To one degree or another, we all fall short.

In

my own life, I fell very, very short. I was an immoral woman. I was raised in the church, but on my honeymoon, my husband took me aside and told me all the things he didn't like about me that he wanted changed. He was bipolar, and our marriage was very strained because he was up and down so much.

Six years

after the wedding, I left him on the advice of two ministers. When our marriage ended, I walked away from everything I knew. I stood and shook my fist in the face of God and said, "I'll find someone to love me."

I

didn't care about guarding my glory; all I cared about was securing my own happiness. It wasn't until the age of 29 that I came to

know Jesus

Christ personally and began to care about living in ways that please Him and reflect His image.

God

has a remedy for those who aren't walking close to Him, who aren't guarding their glory. The Bible tells us that He loved the world so much that He sent His Son to save us (see John 3:16-17). Jesus, the Word, "became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

Something

very significant happened when He did this, something profoundly meaningful during this time of the year. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (v. 14, NKJV).

REFLECTING GOD'S GLORY

Jesus

guarded His glory—He was a perfect representation not only of His perfect Father in heaven but also of perfect (ideal) man here on earth.

This comes out so clearly in His response to the disciples after Philip

says "'Show us the Father'" -250 (John 14:8, NASB). Jesus replied: "'Have

I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip?

He who has seen Me has seen the Father'" (v.9).

Jesus'

obedience to the Father's will was so complete that He was also able to truthfully say that He did and said only what He first saw the Father do and say (see John 5:19,30; 8:26,28).

How could Jesus say that? Because He guarded His glory. Hebrews 2:10 says, "It was fitting for [the Father], for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings." The Father had to perfect Jesus through suffering so that He could bring us, the sons of God, to glory. Jesus was willing to endure this suffering because He wanted to guard His own glory by doing not His will, but the Father's.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is a high priest who was tempted in all points as we are and yet was without sin (see Heb. 4:15). He learned obedience through the things He suffered (see Heb. 5:8). The prime example of this was when He willingly drank the cup His Father gave Him to drink, enduring the agony of crucifixion to bring sinners into a righteousness and glory they could never attain on their own.

That's why we have to guard our glory in every situation of life by continually saying to God, as Jesus did, "'Not my will, but Thine, be

done'" (Luke 22:42, KJV). Hebrews 1:3 says Jesus is "the radiance of [God's] glory and the exact representation of His nature" (NASB). That's what you want to be.

How do we become the representation of God's nature? We look at Christ! Second Corinthians 4:6 tells us, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

I can look at Christ and see what I should be—perfect man: the image and glory of God! That's why Paul wrote, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). As God's children, we are to live, behave, react and order our lives in such a way that we can say, "Imitate me to the extent that I imitate Christ." We are to reflect His glory.

Shortly before He was crucified, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "'I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do'" (John 17:4). He brought glory to His Father by completing all the assignments God gave Him.

If we want to be able to say the same thing at the ends of our lives, then we must guard our glory. How do we do this?

BEHOLDING THE GLORY

In

2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul tells us one of the ways. He says, "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." In other words, we have to gaze at the glory of the Lord so we can see what we are supposed to look like. We do this in part by reading and studying the Bible.

I

think the greatest need in the world is for Christians to return to the Word of God. We're reading too many books by people and not reading the book, the only book by God. When you and I open this book, we are opening the very words of God, the treasures that unlock the meaning to this life and the hope of eternal life.

The

Bible is not just a textbook; it contains eternal food and nourishment.

Jesus said, "'It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"'" (Matt. 4:4, NIV).

So

how do I live by His "every word"? I receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior so that the Spirit of God— a very personal, resident

tutor—comes to live inside me to teach me and explain to me the things that belong to God, things only He knows and can reveal (see 1 Cor. 2:10-15).

As I go into the Word of God, the Spirit of God helps me to discover what He is saying, what He means and how I can live in such a way as to be changed into the perfect image and glory of God.

When I behold as in a mirror Jesus' glory, I see my spots and my blemishes, and I also see where I'm supposed to be. I see who He is, and I look at Him and say: "I will guard the glory You gave me (see John 17:22). I will not take Your glory and exchange it for an image made of man. I will not turn to broken cisterns that can't hold water. I will stay at the fountain of living waters, and I will drink deeply of my Lord and my God."

It's time for us to return to the Word of God. It's time for us to esteem His words more precious than our physical food. It's time for us to be able to say with the psalmist, "I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, for You Yourself have taught me" (Ps. 119:102, NASB).

When

you open the Word of God, it transforms you. It puts everything into eternal perspective and places eternity itself before your eyes (see 2 Cor. 4:18). God's eternal plan is this: the whole earth, someday, "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" (Hab. 2:14).

I want this to begin me. You know you do, too!

ARE YOU GUARDING YOUR GLORY?

I have to be careful to guard my glory in every area of my life. When I get dressed I have to ask myself, "Does my outfit glorify God?"

My heart breaks for the churches. I grieve over the low necklines. I grieve over the slits up the sides. I grieve over the short skirts that cause men to battle against the lust of the eyes and the flesh.

Does your dress glorify the Lord, or have you exchanged your glory for "the image of the earthy" (1 Cor. 15:49) and "the spirit of the world" (1 Cor. 2:12)? You must be the example. You must remember that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that you are to glorify God in your body, which belongs to Him (see 1 Cor. 6:13,20).

And

how about the way you deal with people? Do you treat them in ways that guard your glory? Do you respond to them as Christ would respond? You should speak His words—kind, gentle words seasoned with grace—not your own, not words filled with passion, anger, resentment or cruelty.

Are you guarding your glory by the way you speak? By the way you behave? By the way you spend your money and possess your possessions? By the way you invest your time, your energies, your talents and your gifts?

We don't retire from God's business! How do I know that? From the Word that says, "He who began a good work in [me] will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

I want to be everything God wants me to be. Even if that means I have to stand and confess my sin when I have done wrong, I will do it. I want to guard my glory.

What is my glory? It's that change from image to image to image to image into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Are you more like Jesus than you were a year ago? Are you more like Him than you were when you were saved? Are you being changed? Are you guarding His glory?

A line

from the film *Amazing Grace* says that William Wilberforce lived his life

“in the eloquence of the gospel.” May you and I in every situation stop

and ask ourselves, “Am I living my life in the eloquence of the gospel?”

“Christ in you, the

hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). I promise if you will live this way, one

day you will be able to turn to those in your church who have imitated

you as you imitated Christ and say to them: “For who is [my] hope or joy

or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord

Jesus at His coming? For you are [my] glory and joy” (see 1 Thess.

2:19-20).

Read a companion devotional.

Kay Arthur is an award-winning author and internationally known Bible teacher. She and her husband, Jack, founded Precept Ministries International in 1970 with the vision to establish people in God’s Word. She has authored more than 100 books and bible studies and is the teacher and host of the Precepts for Life radio program.