

GOD'S PLAN FOR MAN

- A. Introduction: The psalms speak of magnifying God (Ps 34:3; 35:27; 40:16; 69:30; 70:4). We are taking some time to magnify God.
1. When we magnify God, we don't make Him bigger than He is. We make Him bigger in our eyes.
 - a. When we magnify God, we expand our picture of God, get a better view or perspective of God.
 - b. We magnify God by getting a more accurate picture of Him from the Bible and then focusing our attention on Him as He truly is. We are taking some time to magnify God.
 - c. God is small to us, God needs to be magnified, because we don't see Him as He truly is.
 2. One reason God seems small to us, one reason we need to magnify God, is because we don't see the big picture. We don't understand the point, the purpose for which we exist.
 - a. For many of us, salvation is about getting your sins forgiven so you don't have to go to hell, so you can go to heaven when you die. But, salvation is so much more than that.
 1. Jesus died to bring us to God. Jesus died so that we would not longer live for ourselves, but for Him. I Pet 3:18 II Cor 5:15
 2. Salvation is about being make like Jesus through the operation of God's life in us.
 - b. In this lesson we want to talk about God's plan for man in order to magnify God in our eyes.
- B. God is small to us because, in trying to understand salvation and the plan of God, we start with ourselves in our fallen condition. We try to understand God's plan from that vantage point. But, that is not where God's plan and our destiny in God's plan began.
1. We begin with the fact that man is guilty of sin before a holy God and the fact that Jesus came to pay for our sins. If you accept Jesus you can have eternal life and miss hell.
 - a. But many still struggle with a sense of guilt, unworthiness, and shame because we know what we were before we were saved.
 - b. We know God has now made us new creatures, but are uneasy before God, uneasy in His presence, because we know we all are just cleaned up, rotten sinners.
 - c. We struggle with believing that God could really love someone as rotten as me. We have this underlying feeling that He is going to really let me have it at some point.
 - d. Because we know our flaws, failures, shortcomings, and sin, we have trouble believing God really cares for us and or that He will really come through for us.
 1. However, the tone of the NT is not: Grovel before God in fear and unworthiness. The tone is: Come boldly, confidently, to God.
 2. When we magnify God and see Him as He truly is, we see His love for us and it gives us confidence before God.
 2. Yes, we were born into a fallen race. Yes, we were marred by the fall and through Adam's sin we were made sinners.
 - a. But, you must understand that God's plan for you did not begin when you were born. Your history with God did not begin when you were born. Your history with God did not begin when you committed your first sin.
 - b. Your history with God began tin eternity. God knew you in eternity past. You have always been in the mind of God. God is omniscient or all-knowing. There was never a time that God did not know you.
 - c. We take that statement and say: He knew what a goof-up I would be, but He wanted me anyway. When we do that, instead of magnifying God, we minimize Him and His plan.
 3. God knew and knows a perfect you -- you before the race fell in Adam.

- a. God made man in His image and likeness. Gen 1:26,27
 - 1. Let us make a man -- someone like ourselves...so God made man like His Maker. (Living)
 - 2. Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves...so God created people in his own image; God patterned them after Himself. (New Living)
 - b. Gen 1:5--When God created Adam He created the whole race. The work of creation was finished on the sixth with the creation of man. God is every man's Creator. He created us in Adam.
 - 1. Gen 1:31 says that everything God made -- including you in Adam -- was very good.
 - 2. The you that God has known since eternity past is the perfect one He created in Adam.
Ps 139:4
 - 4. We look at ourselves and think: How could God love me? The answer to that question is: How could He not love you. You are His creation, His offspring.
 - a. Man went astray in Adam. Man is in the pigpen of sin and death. Man in Adam is the prodigal son. In the parable of the prodigal son, the father never stopped loving his son and was looking for, waiting for his return -- ready to celebrate it.
 - b. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Men, in the pigpen, are lost to their created purpose, to their original identity. Luke 19:10
 - 1. Luke 15--Jesus told three parables about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son in response to the Pharisees' questioning of His acceptance of sinners.
 - 2. In the mind of the owners of the sheep and the coin, and in the mind of the father, the lost items did not cease to be what they were because they were lost. They still had value to the owner.
 - 5. Lost men are valuable to God. He still sees the coin stamped with His image and likeness, the sheep of His flock that has gone astray, and His beloved son living in a pigpen.
 - a. When God looks at men He sees past the sin, past the fallen condition, to the original image He created. According to the Bible, men, in their fallen condition still bear the image of God.
Gen 9:6; James 3:9
 - b. Acts 17:28--Paul, when preaching to idol-worshipping heathens, called them God's offspring.
 - 1. His salvation plea was: You are the offspring of God so you ought to be able to clearly see that God is not like any of these idols you worship. He is not a rock or a metal statue.
 - 2. God is a Living Being like you. He is your Creator. Therefore, you need to turn from these idols and worship Him, the one who made you in His image and likeness.
 - c. In all of this we are not saying that sin is okay, that God doesn't care if we sin. Man has to turn back to God. Man has to repent, get out of the pigpen and come back to Father's house. We are magnifying God by looking at His plan from the beginning instead of picking it up in the middle of the story.
- C. To fully appreciate God's plan, we must understand that Jesus not only came to seek and save the lost, He came to restore men to the original picture God has had of us since eternity past to show us what that perfect picture looks like.
- 1. There is an original me who is perfect and God wants to restore me to that image. That is what salvation is all about.
 - a. The purpose of redemption is to restore you to your original identity by creation. Jesus came to effect a change in man so that man could be restored to His created position.
 - b. The purpose of the new birth is not to make something never existed before, but rather to restore you to what God created you to be. God created you perfect in Adam. You fell in Adam, but Jesus came to restore you to your created position.

- c. Ps 51:5--We are not denying that we were born into a fallen race and that we have been marred by sin. Obviously we have never experienced that perfection. I don't know a perfect me, but God does. It is a new creation to me, but it has always been in the mind of God. It is how He made me in Adam.
2. To fully appreciate God's plan we must understand some things about Jesus. Jesus is God become a man without ceasing to be God.
 - a. While on earth Jesus did not live as God. He put aside His rights and privileges as God and lived as a man. That is how He could grow, be tired, be tempted, and die. Phil 2:5-7
 - b. As a man, Jesus showed us how sons of God are supposed to live, what sons of God are supposed to look like.
 1. He shows us the perfect picture God has had in His mind for man since eternity past, since the creation of man.
 2. The man Jesus was made in the image and likeness of God. He came to restore men to that same image, to the image and likeness of God.
 - c. There is a sense in which Jesus is the unique (only begotten) Son of God. He is the only man who existed before He was born. He is the only one qualified to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world. But, there is a sense in which Jesus is only the first in a line of men like Himself.
 1. Rom 8:29--To be made like the pattern of His Son (Conyebear); to share the likeness of His Son (Knox).
 2. The Eldest in a vast family of brothers (Weymouth); the eldest among many brothers (20th Cent).
 3. As new creatures we put off the old man and put on the new man. The new creature is not new to God. It is the image or picture of us He has had since eternity past. Col 3:10
 - a. You must be quit of the old self, and the habits that went with it; you must be clothed in the new self, that is being refitted so that the image of the God who created it is its pattern. (Knox)
 - b. And have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being remolded into full knowledge so as to become like Him who created it. (Weymouth)
 - c. Stop lying to one another, for you have stripped off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self which is in the process of being made new in the likeness of its Creator, so that you may attain a perfect knowledge of Him. (Williams)
 4. Salvation is not just getting your sins forgiven so you can go to heaven when you die. Salvation is being made like Jesus through the operation of God's life in you.
 - a. To be conformed to the image of Christ means to be made like the man Jesus -- a perfect son in loving relationship with the Father, fully expressing the Father.
 - b. Salvation is that original image and likeness of God being brought into manifestation in every part of our being by the power of God.
 1. II Cor 3:18--But all of us who are Christians have no veils on our faces, but reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord. We are transfigured by the Spirit of the Lord in ever-increasing splendour into his own image. (Phillips)
 2. It is a process that begins at the new birth and will be fully completed at the rapture of the church and the resurrection of the dead.
 5. God made men, in part, as a means of expressing Himself. Jehovah means the Self-Existent One who reveals Himself. God's creation is an expression of Himself. Ps 19:1; Rom 1:20
 - a. Man, made in the image and likeness of God, is the fullest expression of God. When God chose to give us the highest revelation of Himself, He did it by becoming a man, the man Jesus.
 1. Jesus, as a man, fully expressed God. Jesus said: If you've seen me you've seen the Father,

not because I am the Father, but because the Father is perfectly expressed through me. I do His works and speak His words by His life, His power, in me. John 14:10; John 6:57

2. Jesus was not expressing or demonstrating His deity here. He was demonstrating the purpose for which men were created -- to reveal God, to express God.
- b. We are the image and likeness of God. We are meant to express God -- His character and His power. Jesus came to model that and to restore us to that.
- c. Jesus showed us the reason we exist -- to express God and to live in relationship with God as Father and son.

D. Conclusion: We are talking about seeing God as He truly is, magnifying God, by seeing His plan as it truly is. Why does this matter?

1. Knowledge of God's plan, of your destiny -- restoration to the image and likeness of God, complete conformity to the image of Christ, the Perfect Son -- has a purifying effect on us. I John 3:3
 - a. We have got to get beyond: If I commit a sin do I go to hell? Is God going to punish me for this sin? etc. God's plan has never been about punishing sin.
 - b. God's plan is about restoring you to your original image. That knowledge will help you live above sin.
2. Knowledge of God's plan will help you fulfill the purpose for which you were created.
 - a. You are here to know God relationally and then to show Him or express Him. I Pet 2:9; Gal 1:24
 - b. I John 2:6--We are to walk even as Jesus walked.
 1. Must needs live and move as he lived and moved. (Knox); Jesus lived with the consciousness that in God He lived, moved, and had His being.
 2. Ought to be living as he lived (Moffatt); Must live just as he lived (Goodspeed). Jesus lived to please the Father, to do the will of the Father. John 4:34; 9:29
 - c. I John 4:17--As He is, so are we in this world.
 1. What was Jesus when He was on this earth (and what are we)?--Sons of God, men with God in us, the image and likeness of God.
 2. So our love for him grows more and more, filling us with complete confidence for the day when he shall judge all men -- for we realise that our life in this world is actually his life lived in us. (Phillips)
3. You need to understand God's plan. That knowledge will help you magnify God. When God looks at you He sees His image and likeness and it is very good. He who began a good work in you will complete it. Phil 1:6