

# Seeking the glory of God

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Let us turn to **John 7: 14-18**.

## **John 7: 14-18**

- 14 But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and *began to* teach.
- 15 The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"
- 16 So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.
- 17 If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself.
- 18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Here, we see in the context, the Jewish people were uncertain about who the Lord Jesus was. Was He truly from God or was He a false prophet, claiming things that He should not, and claiming that He was speaking on behalf of God?

"How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" – There were various questions they had about the Lord Jesus: Who was He, why was He doing the things He did, speaking the things that He did?

So the Lord Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me." The Lord Jesus wanted them to understand that what He was saying, what He was doing, came from God.

But how were they to be convinced? How were they to know that this was so? And so He explained to them: "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself. If you truly want to know who I am and whether what I am saying is truly of God, you will know: If you are truly willing to do His will, you will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself."

The Lord Jesus then went on further to help them understand some important principles that can guide us in our assessment of people and situations. He said: "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

This seems to be rather simple: "If a person is speaking from himself, we do not trust him - he is seeking his own glory. But if he is seeking the glory of the one who sent him, then he is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

But is this what the Lord Jesus meant: All you need to do is to consider: Is he speaking from himself? Is he seeking his own glory because he is speaking from himself? And if he were to seek the glory of the one who sent him, then he will be true?

It is important that we think through the meaning of what the Lord Jesus was saying.

The Lord Jesus was describing a situation that is common - what is taking place in the world, what often happens.

But He is not saying that outward behaviour – the things that you do in themselves – will tell you whether they are good or bad.

God speaks from Himself but we know that He is right and it is good. Satan speaks from himself and it is not right, it is not good – he speaks of his own, from his own nature, and he is a liar, he is a murderer. So it is important to understand when the Lord Jesus said that, it is not that anyone who speaks from himself will be doing something that is not good, seeking his own glory in the sense of something negative. It depends on the one who is involved.

When our heart is not pure, then speaking from oneself basically would be self-seeking.

God speaks from Himself and it is good. The reason is: He is self-giving.

So, it comes from the heart – the meaning, the reality of it. What is it that you are seeking?

The Lord Jesus did not speak from Himself not because He was not good, but the Lord Jesus did not speak from Himself to teach us how as man we should behave, how we should live our lives – because ultimately, we are created beings and we do not have life in ourselves. So, if we depend on ourselves, we speak from ourselves, then we will be seeking our own glory and that would be negative and improper.

The Lord Jesus is God become Man. As God, He can speak from Himself – perfect, good. But He wants to teach us as man how we should depend on God, look to Him and consider what is right and good.

Ultimately, whether we seek our own glory or not is not just a question of whether we speak from ourselves, in itself. It comes from the heart, the meaning within us.

**Matthew 12: 33-37** – the Lord Jesus explains this very clearly:

**Matthew 12: 33-37**

- 33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.
- 34 "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.
- 35 "The good man brings out of *his* good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of *his* evil treasure what is evil.
- 36 "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.
- 37 "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

So what we say comes from the heart. If our heart is filled with the goodness of God, then the things that we say will bring forth the good treasure. But if our heart is filled with our own personal desires, self-seeking desires and direction in life, then the things that we say, even when they appear to be good, come from a heart that is not good and God will judge us. That is why the Pharisees said many things that appear to be good but the Lord Jesus pronounced woes on them.

The Lord Jesus went on to say, "He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Again, this statement cannot be taken by itself without qualification. It does not mean that anyone who is seeking the glory of someone who sends him, then he is true and there is no unrighteousness in him. We know evil men can seek the glory of Satan. They can do things that promote the glory of Satan but that does not mean that they are true and there is no unrighteousness in them.

Of course, when we look further, we know that when evil men speak to glorify Satan, to seek the glory of Satan, they are also seeking their own glory – they are also seeking for benefits for themselves. So, it is not pure in the direction of what is good.

The good man seeks the glory of God and he is true and he is righteous. Why is that so? That is because the good man seeks the glory of God on the basis that it is good.

So ultimately, it is an issue of the meaning, the direction of our hearts: What are we pursuing? What is it that motivates us? What are we looking for?

It is very easy for us to do many outward things that appear good. But whether they are good or not good depends on the meaning – why we do the things that we do.

The apostle Paul tells us that whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God. That should be the motive within our hearts and that is because God is worthy of glory and it is appropriate and meaningful to bring glory to God because He is good.

But bringing glory to God is not just a question of saying that God is very great, He is very glorious and we keep praising Him. When we say that we bring glory to God by the way we eat or drink, we are not outwardly, constantly saying that God is great, but the manner of our life, the meaning of our life, the direction of our life will glorify God if we belong to Him, we live according to His principles, we speak, we eat, we drink with a spirit of loving God, honouring Him, caring for others, concerned for the well-being of others – this brings glory to God. So glory to God has primarily to do with the moral meaning and direction of our lives, the motive within us.

So then, how does this relate with **verse 17**, where the Lord Jesus said, “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself.”?

If a person truly wants to do the will of God, is prepared to do the will of God, it means that there is a certain direction in his heart. It means he loves what is good; it means that he appreciates God in His moral character and what God is seeking to do; he is identified with Him and he wants to follow Him. So, if a person has this attitude of truly wanting and willing to do the will of God, it will not be difficult for him to appreciate the Lord Jesus – such a person will be able to recognize that the life of the Lord Jesus was lived for God.

He gave His life to live for God; He was not seeking for anything for Himself. He came into this world to be a sacrifice for the sins of men. He came into this world after having left the glory of heaven in order to identify with sinful men, to seek us out in the midst of all our moral corruption, so as to rescue us. He loved us so much.

If our hearts truly love God and we want to do the will of God, it would not be difficult to recognize the direction of the life of the Lord Jesus because everything He did was in this direction: for the glory of God. And the way He spoke, while He spoke with great authority, that authority came from God. He spoke because He was committed to God, because He trusted God, because God was with Him.

And so, contrasted with the scribes and Pharisees: they could quote many things that were right but there was no authority because their hearts were not truly with God.

So the Lord Jesus explains to us: “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory”.

On his part, He was not speaking from Himself. He said, "I can do nothing from Myself. As I hear, I judge": As God leads Him, as God teaches Him, enables Him, He will communicate what was in the heart of God. And this is to help us understand He spoke not from Himself because He wants us to learn to come to God, to know Him and to communicate what is in the heart of God. So He was not seeking His own glory as a man, but He was seeking the glory of God, to fulfil what God wanted to accomplish in His creation of man.

And so He goes on to say: "but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." This is to emphasize that when a person is truly self-giving, when a person is prepared to give himself to God, to what is good, then, he is true. There is no unrighteousness in him because he is not self-seeking but self-giving. This is something that all of us must learn.

If we appreciate what the Lord Jesus has done for us on the cross, if we appreciate His character and how He lived, this must also be true of each believer who desires to walk with God.

Are we seeking the glory of the One who sent Him? When God called Moses to instruct the people of Israel to build the tabernacle, God said it was meant for a dwelling place for God, so that God could manifest His glory. And so, if the people had wrong motives, they would not be able to meaningfully contribute in that direction. So, they must first ensure the direction is right, that when they contribute, their purpose, their direction is to bring glory to God, is to build a sanctuary where God would be pleased to dwell in it and manifest His glory.

While the Scriptures may describe they came with a willing heart, it does not mean that their hearts were totally pure.

We can see in the Scriptures that many of the Israelites were rebellious; they still harboured many things that were wrong; but at least for this direction, for that particular work, they made an effort to move in that direction, to appreciate what God had done for them and to express their appreciation by contributing what they could.

So it is in the body of Christ. We have our various weaknesses, failures, wrong desires, deficiencies... That does not mean that we cannot contribute to the glory of God. We can. But we must take care not to allow these wrong desires within our hearts to grow, to develop. We should deal with them as and when and wherever we recognize them, so that God may then have the freedom to work through us in spite of our failures, difficulties and deficiencies.

So that is why every member of the body of Christ can contribute to the body of Christ, if we are prepared to give up ourselves in order to concentrate on what is meaningful to God.

Of course, the most wonderful thing, the most beautiful thing that can ever happen would be that every member of the body of Christ is pure, where we give ourselves fully for God in every aspect of our lives. Then this would be truly the church without wrinkle or spot or any such thing, that it would be a context where the Lord would be truly pleased. And what is manifested in the glory of God filling the tabernacle would be a spiritual reality: The life of God, the honour of God, the presence of God will be manifested through His people. And this will be a light that shines in the world, will bear a testimony in terms of bringing the gospel of light and life to the people around us.



Bringing the gospel to others is not primarily the words that we say, although it would include and involve the things that we say. But it primarily has to do with the transmission of the spiritual life and meaning within the heart. If we truly love God and we truly love others, there will be a message that can be communicated, and wherever we go, we can contribute in that direction.

So then, it is important for us constantly to consider: Are we seeking something for ourselves, or are we truly seeking the glory of God because we love Him, because of what is good? Do we want to give of ourselves to Him so that there is no more of that self-seeking spirit and attitude within us?

It will take a long time to properly and fully develop that kind of quality, but that is the direction that we must set our hearts towards; we must be prepared to move in that direction, give of ourselves to the utmost that we know how, and the Lord will then teach us and help us to grow.

So then, as we come before the Lord, as we seek to express our gratitude to Him, as we seek to receive life from Him, let us ask Him to help us to understand ourselves, so that if there is any aspect in our hearts that will hinder His working, that will prevent the transmission of His glory, let us ask Him to help us correct that. And if we appreciate that in our hearts we truly love Him and we want to do His will, let us ask Him to help us to deepen in our commitment, to develop further that reality within us, so that He may be pleased to dwell amongst us, dwell in us and to manifest His life and glory through us.

Let us ask Him to help us appreciate what this direction ought to be and what this means in practical terms: How can we properly live for Him, honour Him and be true to Him?