

Church Course 2: Storming the Gates of Hell

What is the First Commandment?

What does that tell us about God's priorities and primary concern?

According to Romans 1 (21-25) – what is the foundational/root sin that has corrupted mankind?

How does God respond to this:

"Has a nation ever exchanged its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols. **Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror,**" declares the Lord " Jeremiah 2:11-12

What is God's great work? What is his ultimate plan and purpose that he is at work to fulfil in this universe?

"I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols." Isaiah 42:8

"For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another" Isaiah 48:11

- Is God a 'self-centred' egotist?
- Why are the above verses such good news to us?

What is the chief end of Man?

What is the chief end of The Church? - his glory and our joy – a perfect fit
My safety and happiness and eternal enjoyment of God's unchanging love seemed as lasting and unchangeable as God himself. Melted and overcome by the sweetness of this assurance, I fell into a great flow of tears and could not stop weeping aloud, it seemed to me that God was my father and Christ my lord and saviour that he was mine and I his, under a delightful sense of the immediate presence and love of God, these words seemed to come over and over in my mind, My God, my all, my God, my all. The presence of God was so near and so real that I seemed scarcely conscious of anything else. The peace and happiness I felt was altogether inexpressible it seemed to be that which came from heaven, to be eternal and unchangeable

What two choices does God have in the face of idolatry, given the decree of Isaiah 42 & 48?

"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them" Genesis 6:11-13

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him" John 3:17-17

“God’s great and first design, in and by the gospel is eternally to glorify himself, his wisdom, goodness, love, grace, righteousness and holiness by Jesus Christ and in order to do this his great and supreme end he has designed the gospel”
John Owen

God’s great work is to glorify himself by transforming idolaters into God-glorifiers.

Satan: The Great Glory Thief

Satan’s great work, his ultimate plan and purpose is to steal God’s glory.

He does this simply by deceiving us to put anything or anybody supreme in our lives before God.

- He doesn’t care whether God comes second or last
- He doesn’t care whether he is acknowledged or not

The biblical name for any person or thing that replaces God is ‘idol’.

Idols are substitutes for God – thus we look to them to be ‘God’ to us.

Nb – the subtlety – he loves to persuade us to make ‘good & legitimate’ objects of our love become our ‘idols’.

There are no other ‘gods’ but God,

“Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save” Isaiah 45:20

However, the ‘power’ behind idolatry is satanic.

A closer look at Romans 1:

- Idols deceive v21,25
- As ‘sinners’ – we worship idols v25
- As ‘sinners’ – we serve – that is are ‘controlled’ and ‘enslaved’ by our idols
- Idols promise to save us but cannot, promise ‘heaven’ but lead to ‘hell’.
- The ‘exchanges’ of Romans 1 reveal that human beings are worshipping creatures, when they cease to worship God – but worship something/someone else instead.
- All people are either God-worshippers or idolaters

The gospel ‘rescues’ idolaters’ and gives birth to ‘God-glorifiers’.

The 'new heaven and new earth' of Revelation 21 is one in which "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" Habakkuk 2:14

"For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy" Romans 15:8

"Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ... according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith – to the only wise God be glory for evermore!" Romans 16:25-27

The way in which the 'earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord' – is by the spreading of the gospel.

The 'mission' of the church is given to us by Jesus, the Lord of the Church:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age" Matt 28:18-20

- Who is Jesus addressing this command to?
- From these verses – how might you define what a disciple is?
- What are the 2 great encouragements in these verses?
- In an 'ordinary, local church' – who does this command apply to?

Matthew 16:13-20

Is Peter the 'rock' on which Jesus will build his church? (see v23)
What else might be the 'rock' on which Jesus will build his church?

V18 "the gates of Hades/hell will not overcome it" (see alternative translation 'not prove stronger than it') ESV "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it".

What images do the different translations bring to mind?

What do you think this verse means?

"What do you want this us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" Matt 8:29

Jesus is Lord over all the earth and by means of his gospel, he is storming the gates of hell. The 'forces of hell' – not the church are on the defensive against the all-powerful, all-conquering King Jesus.

But it does mean that to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ is to be caught up in a fierce battle (Ephesians 6). Every Christian is a 'soldier'(1 Tim 6:12) and called to 'put on the gospel armour'.

God is a Missionary God: Old Testament

- 1) Genesis 1:28 + 3:15 + 9:1 fill the earth – increase in number,
- 2) Genesis 12:1-3
- 3) Psalm 96:1-13 + 98:1-4 + 145:8-13 ps 96 – all the earth, procl salv – glory - joy
- 4) Isaiah 55:3-5 + 56:6-8

God is a Missionary God: New Testament

John 3:16 & John 20:21

Matt 28:18-20

Acts 1:8

Revelation 7:9-10 & 21:1-4

God The Father Sends the Son + the Holy Spirit

John 17:18

Gal 4:4 + 4:6

- Jesus the Son 'accomplishes' our salvation
- The Holy Spirit 'applies' the salvation Jesus has won.

The Holy Spirit is a Missionary God who empowers the Church to proclaim the gospel:

Acts 1:8, 2:4 + 41 4:8,10 + 12, 4:31, 8:1 + 4 + 29, 13:1-4

(NB the intent and focus of the Holy Spirit's work in the church and in the lives of individual believers is not for us to obsess with 'spiritual experiences' that turn us inwards but is about 'glorifying Jesus' and leading us in mission)

What This Means For A Local Church

"The King has spoken, it should be clear that He expects us all to obey His will with reservations or delay. But it should be also be clear that the majority of local American (British) congregations are, in practice, saying no to His will. They do so by ignoring it... the evidence is easily found in lack of zeal for outreach...other congregations still give lip service to missions and evangelism, but inwardly have quit, having lost confidence in their being used by the Lord of the harvest to bring people to him" Jack Miller

"The Great Commission is the Lord's Great Declaration of War. In it, the triumphant Son of Man calls the whole church to abandon civilian status and put itself upon a wartime footing... the missionary mandate is not simply... to send missionaries into the harvest field. It certainly is that. But the entire church is a 'sent church', a commissioned body that is itself involved in the harvesting task" Jack Miller

We Need:

- **A greater passion for God's glory and a greater love for those who are lost**

"His disciples remembered that it is written, "Zeal for your house will consume me" John 2:17

"Father the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you...Now, Father glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world began" John 17:1-4

"While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned...." Acts 17:16 (do we see the idols that grip our culture – are we 'moved/distressed' by them? "I could not endure existence if Jesus was not glorified; it would be hell to me, if he were to be always dishonoured" – Henry Martyn).

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd" Matt 9:36

"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it" Luke19:41

"I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race" Romans 9:1-3 (this is the expression of a 'gospel-heart' – 'Christ redeemed us by becoming a curse for us' – Gal 3:13)

- **A greater confidence in the Promises of God and the Authority of Jesus**

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" Habbakuk 2:14

"I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols (Isaiah 42:8)...I say: my purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please" (Isaiah 46:9

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go..

- **A greater confidence in the Gospel**

"I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" Romans 1:16

"Faith comes from hearing the message" Romans 10:17

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power" 1 Cor 2:2-4

We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." 2 Cor 4:2-3

- **A greater dependence upon and empowering of the Holy Spirit**

"Not by might nor by power but by my spirit," says the Lord Almighty" Zechariah 4:6

"When he comes (the Holy Spirit) he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin because men do not believe in me" John 16:7-8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" Acts 1:8

- **A greater commitment to and belief in the power of prayer**

"Unless the Lord builds his house its builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain." Psalm 127:1

"You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem (see Revelation 21) and makes her the praise of the earth" Isaiah 62:6-7

"And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it" John 14:13-14

"You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" James 4:2-3

- **A deeper repentance for the idolatries that grip our hearts**

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world, will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me, must follow me; and where I am my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me" John 12:23-26

"Can we therefore find back of all the motives mentioned a supreme and final motive for missions?... **we believe this motive to be a passion for the glory of God in the coming of the Kingdom..** the chief end of missions is not the salvation of men but the glory of God... we go and we send with alacrity and eager passion because His glory is at stake... when we consider the glory of God, success always blossoms from seeming defeat. The Cross is always victorious. Peter's preaching not only, but the stoning of Stephen was to the glory of God.. .we have only to wait on God. His power is infinite.. with God the missionary enterprise has in it all the glory of the impossible, the adventure of leading a forlorn hope to certain victory, the glory of apparent defeat and real triumph in the end" Samuel Zwemer

"Lord set up your kingdom for your own glory; glorify yourself and I shall rejoice. Get honour to your blessed name and this is all I desire. Do with me just what you will: blessed be your name forever that you are God and that you will glorify yourself. O that the whole world would glorify you! O let these poor people be brought to know you and love you for the glory of your ever blessed name" David Brainerd