

## HONORING GOD

"Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30).

This verse is lifted out of the story of Eli, the high priest, and Samuel, the child whom God chose to be a prophet in Israel, following Eli. When Eli became old, though he had been a good man in his earlier days, and was still a good man himself, he did not have the interest in his people that he had had before. For example, though Eli's sons knew not the Lord, Eli put them into office as priests.

It was customary in Israel, when a man of God offered a sacrifice, after the fat had been burned away, for the priest to stick a fleshhook of three teeth in the pan, or caldron, wherein the sacrifice was being offered, and whatever clung to that fleshhook when it was removed, the priest took for himself.

Eli's sons were not the kind of boys that they ought to have been. Consequently, they did things they should not have done. For example, when they would come around to get their part of the offering, they were supposed to wait until the offering had been made, and then they were to take a three-pronged hook and reach in the offering upon the altar, and all the meat that clung to that hook belonged to the priest. But these boys of Eli didn't do that. They made it their business to arrive before the meat was consumed by the fire, when it was first placed on the altar, and they would take a fleshhook and pull off the entire offering for themselves.

When the people objected to what these priests were doing, and said they should not do that, they would say, "If you won't give it to us peaceably, we will take it by force anyway. We are the priests." As a result of the acts of these young priests, the people of Israel began to abhor the sacrifice. When Eli heard this, he rebuked his sons lightly, but allowed them to go on in the priesthood.

One day the man of God went to Eli and said, "Once God told you that He was going to establish your house forever, but now God comes to you, through me, with another message, namely, that your house does not deserve to rule forever. Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Now we shall take this passage of Scripture, study it, and see if we are honoring God as we should. Our attitude toward God is plainly of the utmost importance. Our relationship with others is insignificant in comparison with our relationship to Him. Our attitude toward God is naturally and necessarily one of two kinds. We either honor Him or despise Him. We honor Him by reverence, trust, prayer, obedience, fidelity, and living to His glory. We despise Him by forgetfulness, unbelief, self-will, pride, selfishness, disobedience, and sin of every kind.

### I. How Men Honor God.

#### 1. By their attitude toward Him.

We honor God by an exalted opinion of His perfections. We do not honor God unless we think of Him as the infinitely Holy One, righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works, as being free from the very shadow of imperfection, possessing every excellent quality, as transcending, in the

excellent perfection of His character, the highest thoughts of His creatures, and as being infinitely better than the best conception we are able to form of Him.

The Psalmist said, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." "The Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." Truly "The Lord reigneth."

2. By their worship of Him.

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." The Lord is to be praised for His matchless name. He is the God of grace and goodness; the God of justice and righteousness; the God of love and mercy; the God of beauty and holiness; and the God of might and majesty. Man can worship God. He can magnify God in his own heart and before men. Man can glorify the name of the Lord. Everyone should adore and worship God.

God had Isaiah to record this message: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it" (58:13-14).

What a marvelous promise from God! In substance God said, if you will not indulge in your pleasures on My holy day, and shall honor Me, and shall turn from your own sinful ways, and shall speak My words, then I will bless you, and will pour out My blessings upon the high places. What an appropriate Scripture for our day, when so few give God a thought on the Lord's Day. To the average person Sunday is not a holy day, but merely another holiday. He thinks of it as a day of frolic and pleasure, instead of worship. He uses Sunday strictly as a time for himself, and forgets God completely. God says, "If you will honor Me, then I will honor you, and will cause you to ride upon the high places."

Psalms 29:2 says, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." We can honor God in the manner in which we worship, the way in which we turn aside from the tasks of the day, and the way in which we put God first on His day. We can and should honor Him with our worship.

3. By their gifts to Him.

The Bible says, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10). God requires us to honor Him with our substance, or whatever He has given us by way of a livelihood. God always blesses the person who puts Him first.

4. By their praises of Him.

In Psalm 71:8 we read, "Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day." Whom do you praise for the good things that come to you in life? When you have a good day, whom do you praise? When God blesses you in your home, and you have peace and happiness therein, do you praise the Lord for it? God teaches that we must praise Him if we want to honor Him. We come to the house of the Lord and sing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," but we do not praise Him enough between times.

5. By their service for Him.

God rightfully expects His children to honor Him by dedicating themselves to Him for use in His service. Through Paul the Lord said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It is the plan of the Lord to use saved people as vessels of honor to aid Him in His work. One can honor God by presenting himself to the Lord for dedicated service in preaching, teaching, singing, visiting, comforting, praying, and witnessing in His name.

"The service of Jesus true pleasure affords,  
In Him there is joy without an alloy;  
'Tis heaven to trust Him and rest on His words;  
It pays to serve Jesus each day.

It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,  
It pays every step of the way;  
Tho' the pathway to glory may sometimes be drear,  
You'll be happy each step of the way."

II. How God Honors Men.

God honors men far more than men honor Him. He made this wonderful promise:  
"Them that honor me, I will honor."

1. God honors men in creation.

After God had created the heavens and the earth and the other living creatures, He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Thus God created man with a physical, mental, social, and spiritual nature. "Thou hast made him (man) a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor." Thus man is "fearfully and wonderfully made." God has honored man in creating him in His own image and likeness.

2. God honors men with salvation.

After God created man in His own image, man disobeyed God and became sinful. But God loved sinful man and sent His only begotten Son into the world to reveal His love, and to die that sinful men might be saved from sin. He saves men from the guilt, penalty, dominion, and habit of sin, and gives them eternal life. What an honor to be a child of God!

3. God honors men with a job.

"We are laborers together with God." When the Lord saves a person from sin, and takes him into His family, He gives him a work to do in His kingdom. God works with His own who honor Him and helps them to accomplish His will in His work. What an honor it is to be permitted to work with God!

I shall now bring this message to a close by giving you a few examples of those whom God honored.

(1) Joseph.

As a lad Joseph was sold into bondage in Egypt. God's Word tells us some of the difficulties that Joseph had, and how a woman lied on him, and he was cast into a dungeon. In and through it all Joseph put God first. After a while Joseph was sitting on the throne, controlling important affairs, dealing out grain for bread for the starving people in different nations. He was second only to King Pharaoh. Joseph had honored God, and God honored him.

(2) Ruth.

A Hebrew man and his wife left Egypt and went over into the land of Moab at a time of famine. The husband died and the two sons of this couple married Moabites. Later, the two sons died. By and by, the time came that the mother, bereft of her husband and two sons, decided to go back home, because she had heard that there was food in the land of Palestine.

When she started to leave, she kissed her daughters-in-law, and said, "Go, return each to her mother's house." The Word of God tells us that Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her. Then her mother-in-law, Naomi, said to Ruth, "Behold thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law." Ruth replied, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Ruth went on to Palestine with her mother-in-law, Naomi.

Later, the Word of God tells us how God gave Ruth a husband--the richest man in all that country, and blessed them with children. Then, when Ruth died, her influence did not die. In Matthew's Gospel we are told that Ruth was an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ. How God did honor this girl because she honored Him! He has said, "Them that honor me, I will honor."

(3) Daniel.

There was a boy in the land of Israel who was captured and carried into captivity in Babylon. As a lad in Babylon, he was chosen, because of his high intelligence, to be sent to the king's college, to be educated

at the king's expense, and to become a part of the brain trust of the land of Babylon. The name of this boy was Daniel.

One day there came a test in the life of this lad. In keeping with a custom in that institution, the king issued an edict that everybody had to eat pork and drink wine. Daniel said, "No, it is wrong. God said for the Jews not to eat pork or to drink wine. I can't do it because it won't honor my God, to Whom I have dedicated my life." The keeper of the school said, "If I allow you this privilege, then you won't look as good as the rest of the students in the school. The result will be that you will not be as smart, and consequently my head will be in danger." Daniel proposed that they try it for ten days. At the end of the ten days he stumped the professors. He knew the answers to all the questions. Moreover he was healthier than any of the other students. He looked better than the others. Notice, it paid Daniel to honor God. Frequently it pays to say "no."

Later, Daniel served as prime minister in Babylon under three kings. When he became an old man, the Word of God tells us that he made another important decision, namely, that he was still going to pray to his God. Nobody could force him to quit praying to his God. He opened the window and prayed with his face toward Jerusalem, just as the Lord had taught him in His Word. The people saw him, and they persuaded the king to make a decree or law that anybody who prayed to any other god other than the king for thirty days was to be cast into the lion's den. Daniel might have pulled the shades and prayed in a darkened room, but he didn't do it. He did just what the Word of God had taught him to do, and God blessed him and cared for him. Even though Daniel was cast into the lion's den, God took care of him in the midst of those wild beasts. Daniel discovered that it is better to be in a lion's den with the Lord than on the outside without Him.

God says, "Them that honor me I will honor." Before God will honor you, you are going to have to honor God. If you are going to expect God to pour out His blessings upon you, then, you are going to have to put God first so far as your life is concerned. Are you willing to honor God?