"STOLEN GLORY"

ACTS 12:20-24

8-16-2026

*** Say "No" to the temptation to steal God's glory.**

How?

By understanding what type of crime stealing glory is.

I. STEALING GLORY IS A <u>SEDUCTIVE</u> CRIME (v. 20-22)
(The conditions are right; the stage is set)

It is seductive because:

A. IT APPEALS TO OUR SIN NATURE

B. IT SWALLOWS THE UNSUSPECTING

II. STEALING GLORY IS A <u>SELFISH</u> CRIME (v. 23)
(The crime is committed)

It is selfish because:

A. YOU ARE TAKING FOR YOURSELF WHAT IS NOT YOURS

B. YOU ARE KEEPING FROM GOD WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY HIS

III. STEALING GLORY IS A <u>SERIOUS</u> CRIME (v. 23)
(The consequences are serious)

A. HEROD FACED <u>IMMEDIATE</u> JUDGMENT

B. HEROD FACED <u>SEVERE</u> JUDGMENT

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INTRODUCTION:

What would you say is the greatest crime man can commit?

Arson? Theft? Rape? Murder?

What do the above crimes have in common? ANSWER: In each of them, the criminal is taking from other people that which does not belong to him (basically, stealing)

In Arson - one burns that which is not his own

In theft - one robs that which is not his own

In rape - one injures and mars the sexual purity of someone else

In murder - one takes the life of some innocent person.

To take from man what doesn't belong to you is serious, but to take from God is more serious.

Today we will see the most vile, blasphemous sin imaginable.

And it is a crime we have all committed to one degree or another.
It is the sin of stealing that which belongs only to God. It is stealing His glory.

[NOTE: If the greatest thing we can do is glorify God, then the greatest sin is to steal His glory for ourselves]

TURN TO Acts 12:20-24

NOTE: V. 23 - "He gave not God the glory."

The word "glory" refers to the radiance or brilliance that shines from the one who has it. In secular Greek, it referred to high reputation, praise, fame, honor, and power (DNTT, p. 44).

Herod, by not giving God the glory, stole it for himself.

*** Say "No" to the temptation to steal God's glory.**

How?

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I. STEALING GLORY IS A SEDUCTIVE CRIME (v. 20-22)

(The conditions are right; the stage is set)

V. 20

Background - V. 20 "highly displeased" = lit. to have a "heated fight." Herod was furious!

The problem of Tyre and Sidon - they needed food.
"Nourished" = to feed, provide or supply with food.

The Phoenician cities depended largely on the imported grain which grew in large quantities in the fields of Galilee, and Herod had cut off their supply.

It is seductive because:

A. IT APPEALS TO OUR SIN NATURE

V. 20

To get what they wanted, those of Tyre and Sidon used 4 sly diplomatic maneuvers to get on the "good side" of King Herod.

1. They kept sending united delegations (they figured there was power in unity and numbers)

2. They made friends with Herod's trusted body guard (they sought to appease Herod through a mediator)

   "Chamberlain" = the one over the king's bed chamber. He was in charge of the king's bedroom. Hence, he was one whom the king trusted; one whom the king came into contact with frequently.

3. They made repeated requests for what they wanted.

   "Desired peace" = lit. kept on asking for peace (imperfect tense)

4. They appealed to his pride (ego) (v. 22)

They tried getting Herod to bend by a united voice, by mediation (friendship), persistence, and finally pride.

After all else failed, they figured: "Let's butter him up . . . let's appeal to that which all men fall to . . . let's go right to the heart of everyone's weak spot . . . let's tickle his ear . . . let's entice his ego . . . let's allure his arrogance . . . let's provoke his pride!"

NOTE: They didn't make him proud. What they did was pull it out of him.

No one makes anyone proud (egocentric or arrogant). Self-centered pride is at the core of everyone's sinful nature. We are born with it!

B. IT SWALLOWS THE UNSUSPECTING

An unsaved man is blind to this sin. He sees it as being okay (not that bad).

Herod was no different.

Herod Agrippa followed in the steps of his grandfather, Herod the Great, and was (as Josephus describes) "a great builder."

Like Nebuchadnezzar, who took pride in what he viewed as his achievement (Dan. 4:29-31), Herod was proud of his building projects (SEE Josephus, Antiquities, Book XIX, 7.5.)

He no doubt took pride in his power over the Christians (he thought he could crush whom he wanted - cp. v. 1, 2)

He no doubt was proud of his "intellectual genius," his great wealth, and his ability to manage Palestine.

So now, on a "set day," while making a speech, he is acclaimed as god.

V. 21

"Set Day" = according to Josephus, it was a festival in honor of Caesar; possibly on the first of August, which also was the anniversary of Herod's birthday (Rienecker, p. 290). His last birthday!

Even as Christians, we may be tempted at times to steal glory that belongs to God, but this does not mean that we must give in.

EX: Peter, when bowed down to and worshipped by Cornelius, said, "Stand up; I myself also am a man."

EX: Paul, after surviving a venomous snake bite, was called "a god" by the barbarians of Malta, yet he did not accept any such notion (Acts 28:6).

EX: In Acts 14, after healing a crippled man at Lystra, the people cried out "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (v. 11). They prepared to sacrifice. Note Paul's response: Acts 14: 14-15 - "Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein."

II. STEALING GLORY IS A SELFISH CRIME (v. 23)

(The crime is committed)
It is selfish because:

A. YOU ARE TAKING FOR YOURSELF WHAT IS NOT YOURS

Herod should have rebuked them for calling him "god."

Josephus says that : "Upon this [their calling him god], the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery" (Ant. XIX, 8.2.)

By not rejecting the glory, Herod in effect accepted it.

God, however, says: "I am the LORD (YAHWEH - the eternal "I AM"): that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another" (Is. 42:8; cp. Ex. 3:15; Ps. 83:18).

"I will not give my glory unto another" (Is. 48:11).

Satan fell because he sought the glory that only belonged to God (READ Is. 14:9-15).

He still tries to offer worldly glory (Mt. 4:8).

God, however, says that we are not to seek glory from men (Mt. 6:2; I Thes. 2:6).

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory" - Phil. 2:3.

"Let us not be desirous of vain glory" (Gal. 5:26).

God commands us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think (Ro. 12:3).

When God saves a soul through your testimony, where do you want the credit to go?

--The intellect, talents, and abilities you have -- where did they come from? Then who should received the glory? I Cor. 4:7 - "For who maketh thee to differ from another . . ."

--Where did your title or position come from?

John the Baptist testified: "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven" (Jn. 3:27)

It is said of the O.T. high priest: "No man taketh this honor unto himself" (Heb. 5:4).

B. YOU ARE KEEPING FROM GOD WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY HIS

Never forget your place under God! We are mortal, He is immortal; we are sinners (saved by grace), He is the Savior!

"Blessed Be the Name" - Hymn Vs.# 1 "All praise to Him who reigns above in majesty supreme, who gave His Son for man to die, that He might man redeem!
Vs. # 2 - "His name above all names shall stand, exalted more and more, at God the Father's own right hand, where angel hosts adore!"

--Do you want to leave your impression on others, or God's impression?

--Are you interested in guarding your reputation, or God's?

--Do you do what you do so that God would be praised and honored, or yourself? If you serve (minister) for your glory, for the applause of men, for a pat on the back, you will only serve as long as you're getting these rewards. But if you serve for God's glory, the "gates of Hell" shall not prevail against you!

Two times Paul had to tell the glory-seeking Corinthians, who tended to "measure themselves by themselves" (II Cor. 10:12), "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17).

READ Jer. 9:23-24.

Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 5:14).

Hymn - "To God be the glory, great things He hath done..."

III. STEALING GLORY IS A SERIOUS CRIME (v. 23)

(The consequences are serious)

God judges those who usurp His position and claim divine honors for themselves (Marshall, p. 212).

A. HEROD FACED IMMEDIATE JUDGMENT

In the Bible, God's swift judgment shows the severity of the crime of stealing His glory.

EX: Nebuchadnezzar - "While the word was in the king's mouth..." (Dan. 4:31).

"The Angel of the Lord" = perhaps the same angel that delivered Peter from prison (v. 7).

B. HEROD FACED SEVERE JUDGMENT

Why was the judgment so severe on Herod Agrippa I?

Were not many other Roman rulers frequently deified (treated like a god)?

The difference is that, though not a believer, Herod knew better. He was a nominal Jew (of Maccabean descent) who defended Judaism. He knew the O.T. law!

"To whom much is given, much shall be required..."

Another reason why God dealt severely with Herod was the public nature of the crime. Everyone in Caesarea heard him acclaimed as a god; so to defend His honor, God had to show all of Caesarea that he was not!

After Nadab and Abihu's death, God said these words: "Before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3).

"I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 39:13; cp. Hag. 1:8).

SEE Josephus, Antiquities, XVII, 6.5.; XVIII, 6; XIX; and The Jewish Wars, I.33.5. for the life and death of Herod Agrippa I. NOTE: the violent nature of his death.

Antiochus Epiphanes (a wicked, blasphemous, Grecian ruler) died a very similar fate (cp. II Maccabees 9:9)

Is. 5:14 - "Therefore, hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it."

"When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful . . . wherefore God also gave them up." (Ro. 1:21, 24)

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up" (Ja. 4:6, 10)

Samuel said to King Saul: "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not made head over Israel and king?" I Sam. 15:17

What is frightening about sin (pride in particular) is that it tends to be perpetuated in our children. Herod Agrippa's son, named Agrippa II, ended up living in incest with his own sister Bernice (Ant., IX, 1), and together they marched into the trial of the Apostle Paul "with great pomp" (display his greatness) (Acts 25:23).

CONCLUSION:

I Peter 1:24-25a - "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever."

The proud come to their end. But the Word of God still lives!

READ Acts 12:24

Today we need to ask God to purify our motives.

To reveal our selfish tendencies. To weed out any desires for self-glory.

Whatever you do, do all to the "glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31).

Do all so that He would receive the honor, recognition, and praise.

How can we glorify God?

1. Praising Him

   "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Ps. 50:23)

2. Calling upon Him

   When trouble comes, God delivers us (when we call upon Him) so that we would glorify Him (Ps. 50:15 - "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

3. Shining for Him

   By letting our light shine and doing good works, God will be glorified.

   "Let your light so shine...that they may see...and glorify..." (Mt. 5:16).

From now on, our testimony needs to be that of David: "I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wonderful works" (Ps. 145:5).