

1 Peter 1.3-12 *10-12
God's Glory – The Highest Good

“God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in him.”¹ Those words, put into print a year after my birth in 1986 are words that have defined a generation of those that have found the highest good of delighting in God. John Piper, arguably the most influential pastor and theologian of our current generation, said those words and captured my attention towards answering the question – “Why did God create the world?” Have you ever considered such a question? Why did God create the world? Why does God cause the sun to come up each morning and the stars to follow at night? Why does God allow the mountains to sit silently in place and the ocean to roar and foam? Why do newborn babies cry? Why does the butterfly come to rest on a flower and drink its nectar? The answer – All for the glory of God alone!

Piper recaptured this theme but this theme is not new with him. Piper was following a path, a well-worn but forgotten path tread by others before him. Like Jonathan Edwards and the Puritans, like John Calvin and Luther, like Paul and the Apostles, like Christ himself who taught us, the end for which God created the world is not our happiness but His glory. Does his glory involve our happiness? Sure. But our happiness is not the motivation for God doing things. The motivation for God's activity is always the highest attainable thing, and the highest attainable thing imaginable is the Glory of God.

I wonder how often we are moved and motivated by the amazing, astounding, and awe-inspiring glory of God? I believe A.W. Tozer was right when he said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”² That either gives you great relief or causes you great grief. Too often my experience, maybe yours too, is that we don't give our minds over to contemplating God and his glory. We are too easily satisfied by trinkets when God has laid before us the very Treasure of heaven. And it's not just in our own private contemplation that we have to be concerned about, it's in the mainstream brought to us daily by the very ones who call themselves practitioners of the gospel – preachers and churches. Tozer, back in 1961 saw the landscape and described it this way in the preface of *Knowledge of the Holy*:

The church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshipping men. This she has done not deliberately, but little by little and without her knowledge; and her very unawareness only makes her situation all the more tragic. This low view of God entertained almost universally amongst Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. A whole new philosophy of the Christian life has resulted from this one basic error in our religious thinking.

With our loss of the sense of the majesty of God has come the further loss of religious awe and consciousness of the divine Presence. We have lost our spirit of worship and our

¹ Piper, *Desiring God*.

² Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, 1.

ability to withdraw inwardly to meet God in adoring silence. Modern Christianity is simply not producing the kind of Christian who can appreciate or experience the life in the Spirit. The words, “Be still and know that I am God,” mean next to nothing to the self-confident, bustling worshiper in this middle period of the twentieth century.

This loss of the concept of majesty has come just when forces of religion are making dramatic gains and the churches are more prosperous than at any time within the past several hundred years. But the alarming thing is that our gains are mostly external and our losses wholly internal; and since it is the quality of our religion that is affected by internal conditions, it may be that our supposed gains are but losses spread over a wider field.³

What Tozer describes comes about when the church loses its vision of the glory of God. Today is Reformation Sunday at Oxford. October 31 is the 500th anniversary of Luther’s nailing his 95 Theses on the Door of the Church in Wittenberg, Germany that began the Protestant Reformation. We are looking at the 5 Truths that are the product of the Reformation, the 5 Solas. Today we consider the end of the 5 Solas – *Soli Deo Gloria*, say that – God’s glory alone. What do we mean by God’s glory alone?

God’s glory alone means that in the end God receives all the glory.

It is interesting that when we define God’s glory we are hard pressed to come up with any other word other than glory to describe what we mean. It’s like looking up a word that you don’t know and seeing that word used in the definition. What is God’s glory? God’s glory is shorthand for describing the preeminent worth, the awe-inspiring splendor, and breathtaking beauty of God. God’s glory alone is meant to direct our affections, our desires, our worship, our adoration, so that we can say, “God alone, God alone, all glory ascribe!”

Some are not satisfied with such an abstract definition. I admit, it is abstract, I wish I could do better for you, but I am okay with the mystery of it all. God is ineffable, meaning that God is too great to be expressed in words. This ineffable God who has made himself known receives all glory! We tread carefully because we don’t want to erect a god of our imagination. We don’t want a god who shared his glory with another, we want the God who cannot share his glory with another. As John Chrysostom told his congregation one time, “A comprehended God is no god at all.”

So, we might sum up our entire Reformation series like this:

Salvation (our only hope in life and death) according to Scripture is in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, to God’s glory alone.

Today we contemplate God’s glory. What a joy, what a privilege to join with the angels to peer into the glory of God. The angel first song when salvation arrived in Bethlehem was *Glory to*

³ Ibid, vii.

God and in the end, we will join them in forever singing Glory to God! So today, we get to tune our hearts to the song of the universe – the glory of God.

Think back at where we have been for just a moment. It shouldn't come as a surprise that we arrive at God's glory alone. What have we seen?

Scripture Alone – Not man's word but God's word to man *alone* marks out the plan and purpose of God.

Christ Alone – No one else redeems sinners and turns slaves into sons and daughters.

Grace Alone – No contribution is made by us, but salvation is received. How?

Faith Alone – No other action other than faith.

God's Glory Alone – No one receives honor, praise, credit for salvation.

All of these terms describe salvation. There is one word that marks the protest. Can you guess what word it is? It is not Scripture, Christ, Grace, Faith, or even Glory. Everyone agrees with all of these terms. The word that marks the protest is *alone*. Scripture, Christ, Grace, Faith and in the end, God gets the glory! God has orchestrated our eternity with him to remove all obstacles of our self-centeredness so that we could focus forever on saying great thing he has done.

Do you see what God's glory alone does? This at once removes our focus towards self and redirects our gaze towards glory! How on earth have we come so far? How on earth could we be self-centered, self-consumed, devoid of glory? No wonder often we are discouraged, depressed, disheartened – we forfeit the glory of God for that which is not.

This is why God gave us His word. This is why Peter writes. Turn to 1 Peter. When you make your way over to 1 Peter you'll notice that Peter is writing to a certain group that he calls *elect exiles*. If you are in exile you probably need encouragement. By the way, this is us – we who believe in the Son - elect exiles. Peter encourages by keeping the glory of God before them.

We have been looking at 1:3-12 for a couple of weeks now looking at each section and demonstrating that these 5 Solas are not imposed upon the text but rise from the text. Today I want us to finish the Sola Series by concentrating on 10-12. Because 3-12 is one long sentence let's start reading at verse 3.

READ TEXT

What is Scripture teaching us about God's Glory Alone? 3 Things from these last three verses:

1. Glory Has Been God's Plan All Along

Look at verse 10. Peter is making reference to the plan and purpose of God from the beginning. The Old Testament tells an unfolding story of God's plan to redeem the world. God's plan is all in the beginning and each story is further commentary on how God will save the world through the seed of the woman who will have his heel bruised but crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Peter tells the believers that they are the recipients of the hope that has not only filled every page of Scripture but the hope that has filled every day of human existence.

Paul says something similar in Galatians 4:4-5 to encourage believers: *In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons.* And the author of Hebrews begins in similar terms when he writes *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son....* God's plan all along has been to save us. This is why the Bible calls speaks about predestination and says things like our names are written in the lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8; 17:8). God's plan all along has been glory.

Back in the 1700's there was a very influential preacher named Jonathan Edwards. He wrote a few sermons that some of you have heard of, probably some have read. Have you ever read "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"? Edwards was a theologian preoccupied with the glory of God and set forth to answer a question – "Why did God create the world?" How would you answer that question? It can't be because he is lacking or lonely. God freely chose to create the world to reveal his glory, and his glory being known has been the plan since the beginning.

At the centerpiece of the revelation of the glory of God is the cross of Christ, the suffering of the Son.

2. Glory Comes Through Suffering

Look at verse 11. The way that God gloriously calls us to fellowship with himself is through the Cross of Christ, the suffering of the Son. This is an important point for us to not forget. Jesus said when you see me you see the Father, I and the Father are one. Colossians calls Jesus the image of the invisible God. When we think of Jesus one image automatically captures our vision – the Cross. The Son of God crucified is the climax. His whole life, even from Bethlehem's cradle was leading to Calvary's Cross, which would eventually mean his Crown of Glory. That is the order – Cradle, Cross, Crown. The glory of God is manifest in the Cross. As one theologian said, "To behold the God of glory, we must behold God beaten, mocked, and crucified."⁴

Sounds strange? It has for a long time. One of the earliest depictions of Jesus is actually a piece of Roman graffiti scratched on a plaster wall somewhere around 200 AD. The *Alexamenos graffiti* depicts a man being crucified with the head of a donkey. This has been interpreted as the Romans mocking the idea that Christians worship a man that they crucified. Such an idea of a suffering savior takes the paradigm of the world and turns it on its head. But we who know the

⁴ Vandrunen. *God's Glory Alone*, 17.

crucified One agree with Paul, *The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God, For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.* (1 Corinthians 1:18-19).

There is a seam that Peter is showing us. Look at verse 1, *elect exiles*; then look at verse 6 and 7, trials, sufferings; then look at 11, the suffering Christ; then flip ahead to 2:21. *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.* Suffering shouldn't surprise us if we understand that glory comes through suffering.

This Christ who suffered calls us to glory and the way that he calls us to glory is to come, take up our cross, and follow him.⁵ Glory is coming, but before glory comes the *tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire* so that in the end this faith *may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* (1:7)

You see, number 3:

3. Glory is For Us but Not unto Us

Look at verse 12. This is the beautiful paradox of the glory of God. God is glorious, we are not, but through Christ God causes we who are not glorious to share his glory. It is with this same encouragement that the Holy Spirit who spoke to through Peter spoke through Paul at another church. Listen to 2 Thessalonians 2:15-15: *To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may **obtain** the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then brothers, stand firm....* Did you hear it? Christ's glory is shared with us. It is for us, but never about us. The glory is his and we are in Him. As David Crowder declared: "You make everything glorious, and I am yours. What does that make me?"⁶

Let's go back to where we began. John Piper has said, and I think he is right, "God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in him." He is taking that from another significant Christian confession - the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The Catechism opens with this line:

Q. What is the Chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Do you hear the reciprocal relationship? God who is all sufficient in himself delights in his people's delighting in Him. No wonder the angels long to look into this glorious salvation that God has freely given us. Angels have usually had a front row seat on many of God's acts but of all the acts of God throughout history, one thing above all others captures their attention – God seeking and saving lost ones like you and me! Angels long to look into the glorification of you and me. The glory of God is our highest calling, our greatest good!

Is this your story? Is your story one of glory? Are you right now glorifying in Christ? If not, this glory can be yours, but you must come to him with empty hands and say to you I surrender.

⁵ Vandrunen, 16, says it best: “God is most highly glorified through the suffering of his Son; Christians know God and are glorified with Christ only by taking up their cross and following Him.”

⁶ Crowder, *Everything Glorious*