

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE
Bible Study Notes #11, November 20, 2005

FOR GOD'S GLORY ALONE
(*Soli Deo Gloria*) – Part 1

- **Introduction**

We have finally arrived at the end of our study of the “Distinctives of Grace!” We have looked at all five of the points of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) in response to the Remonstrance, or those opposing traditional and Biblical church teaching of the day based upon what they perceived to be the teachings of Arminius. These responses were grouped into five main points. Later these points became known as the five points of Calvinism (as opposed to Arminianism), and were cutely identified by the acrostic from the national symbol of where the Synod (or church court) was held (viz. Holland), or TULIP. These also are called the five points of the Doctrines of Grace to distinguish between systems of belief that allow for man’s salvation apart from God’s grace alone.

We have also looked at four of the five “sola statements” from the Reformers and what is called Reformed theology. These five statements (Scripture alone, Grace alone, Faith alone, Christ alone and for God’s glory alone) summed up the distinctions of the faith and theology of those “protesting” the Roman church’s system and teachings, and still stand today as perhaps the best, most concise and defining way to distinguish the Christian faith from all others; and more specifically, to distinguish true Biblical Christianity and theology from all other forms of Christianity. They are the bedrock of our faith, the source of our hope, the cause of our peace and the motivation for our love.

As discussed, the five (TULIP) points of Calvinism may be legitimately debated by Bible believers, when their meaning is misunderstood by the terms or stereotypes, when they are made trite and simplistic by modern redefinition, and especially when they are used for abuse by those who go beyond the Bible and make them into a system or ideological system that defines the Bible. We have tried to see these in their original intent and meaning, as responses to errors and a system invented by the Arminians, which are forever subject to the Bible and its proper interpretation. Properly understood, they may help group some of the more neglected aspects of what the Scriptures teach about God’s plan of salvation. But, the point remains and is acknowledged, that sincere, good, Bible-believing Christians can and do line up on both sides of some of these points (of Calvinism).

However, the five “solos” are much more foundational and fundamental to our faith. Hence, there is (or *should* be) much less debate or disagreement on these by those claiming to be truly committed to the Scriptures as God’s Word. They truly should be shared by all who claim to be Christians apart from the Roman church and its theology.

With the five points of Calvinism, it has been rightly affirmed that if we really understood only the first one (Total or *Radical* Depravity), and if we were (Biblically and logically) consistent, we would be forced to affirm all the other four. *Likewise*, the five “solos” can be viewed as being only *one!* If we are forced to pick one that leads to all others and

forces us to agree with the other four, it would have to be *solī Deo Gloria*, “for God’s glory alone!” If we began here, rather than ending here, we would surely still end here also!

And yet, this is perhaps the one most misunderstood, with (at first thought) seemingly the least direct Biblical support, and perhaps the one usually just added on as an “Amen” to the others. We can teach and expound for days on end about any of the others, but what does this one mean? (“You know – it means all the glory goes to God alone! What else do you want to know?) Even among those who accept the traditional “reformed” view of the Bible, the full meaning of this statement is often missed and not understood. In addition, this is the statement that has almost no argument from any Christian, (except a rank modern liberal). No one criticizes those of us who hold to it by saying, “the problem with you guys is that you are always trying to make sure God gets the glory for everything!” And yet, the full meaning of “for God’s glory alone” really is the essence and core of what sets “reformed” theology apart from all other forms of Christianity. It actually succeeds where all others fail; rather than just a verbal commitment to God’s glory; it offers a view (the *only view*) of the Scriptures that actually succeeds in giving God all the glory for all things!

- **Definitions**

As always, we must first be sure that we understand the terms involved.

Glory is used as both a noun and a verb in the Bible. Although the terms are used relative to both man and God, our focus here is obviously God and God alone, so we need to focus upon its meaning as related to God.

1. **Old Testament**

In the OT, the words used most for God’s glory (as a noun) and for the verb “to glorify” (God) stem from a root with a very interesting meaning.

kabowd, *kaw-bode'*; rarely **kabod**, *kaw-bode'*; from Hebrew 3513 (*kabad*); prop. **weight**, but only figurative in a good sense, **splendor or copiousness** :- **glorious** (-ly), **glory, honour** (-able).

(from Hebrew) **kabad**, *kaw-bad'*; or **kabed**, *kaw-bade'*; a primitive root; **to be heavy**, i.e. in a bad sense (*burdensome, severe, dull*) or in a good sense (*numerous, rich, honorable*); **causative to make weighty** (in the same two senses) :- abounding with, more grievously afflict, boast, be chargeable, x be dim, glorify, be (make) glorious (things), glory, (very) great, be grievous, harden, be (make) heavy, be heavier, lay heavily, (bring to, come to, do, get, be had in) honour (self), (be) honourable (man), lade, x more be laid, make self many, nobles, prevail, promote (to honour), be rich, be (go) sore, stop.

“Kabod” refers to the great physical weight or “quantity” of something. It often refers to both “wealth” and significant and positive reputation. It can also indicate the position or honor of an individual. When applied to God, the word represents a quality corresponding to Him and by which He is recognized.

2. New Testament

In the NT, the words used most for God's glory or the action of glorifying God also stem from very interesting root words.

doxa, *dox'-ah*; from the base of Greek 1380 (dokeo); **glory (as very apparent)**, in a wide application (literal or figurative, object or subject) :- **dignity, glory (-ious), honour, praise, worship.**

(from Greek) **dokeo**, *dok-eh'-o*; a prolonged form of a primary verb **doko**, *dok'-o* (used only as an alternate in certain tenses; compare the base of Greek 1166 (deiknuo)) of the same meaning; **to think**; by implication **to seem (truthfully or uncertainly)** :- **be accounted**, (of own) **please (-ure)**, be **of reputation, seem (good), suppose, think**, trow.

As above, the root word ("*dokeo*") from which "*doxa*" comes, primarily meant "to think" or "to recognize", thus *doxa* meant thought or opinion, especially favorable. Thus in a secondary sense it also meant reputation, praise, honor, splendor, light, perfection, etc.

3. Summary Concept and Meaning of "Glory"

Therefore, we might think of the concept of the glory of God as His "weight" or "worthiness", God's favorable opinion, the true apprehension of God, or *what He is in unchanging essence and essentially!* It could also be viewed as *the outward manifestation of all the attributes of God!*

"To glorify (God) might be described as *an acknowledgement of Who God is and who we are!* (There are 2 sure things: There is a God, and you are not Him!)

- **Glory and Worship**

From the above, we can immediately see how worship must accompany glory and they parallel each other. To recognize the glory of God or to glorify God must lead to *worship* of God! Worship cannot occur without recognizing the *glory* of God! After all, *worship* is ascribing to God His "worth" (or *glory*)!

The Cambridge Declaration has stated it well:

"Wherever in the church biblical authority has been lost, Christ has been displaced, the gospel has been distorted, or our faith has been perverted, it has always been for one reason: our interests have displaced God's and we are doing His work in our way. The loss of God's centrality in the life of today's church is common and lamentable. It is this loss that allows us to transform worship into entertainment, gospel preaching into marketing, believing into technique, being good into feeling good about ourselves, and faithfulness into being successful. As a result, God, Christ, and the Bible have come to mean too little to us and rest too inconsequentially upon us.

God does not exist to satisfy human ambitions, cravings, the appetite for consumption, or our own private spiritual interests. We must focus on God in our worship, rather than

the satisfaction of our personal needs. God is sovereign in worship, we are not. Our concern must be for God's kingdom, not our own empires, popularity or success."

- **The Ultimate Motive & Compulsion**

The first question of *the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Catechism) defines the central issue for all things in our lives, when it asks "What is the chief and highest end of man?" The answer is "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever." (Psa. 73:24-28, John 17:21-23)

John Calvin began his *Institutes* with an interesting paradox. He says that in order for us to understand Who God is, we must first understand something of who man is.

A. W. Tozer in *The Knowledge of the Holy* states that "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." In other words, we must think rightly about God in order to think rightly about ourselves and vice versa.

That the glory of God is the ultimate motive and end is true not only for worship, which is our ultimate priority, but also in our outreach ministry to the lost world and in our nurturing ministry to the church.

The Motive -	The Glory of God -	The Great Compulsion
Is manifested	and achieved in	
The Mandate -	Exalting the Savior -	The Great Commandment
And in		
The Mission -	Extending the Kingdom -	The Great Commission
And in		
The Method -	Equipping the Saints -	The Great Commitment

Seeing and being captivated by the glory of God makes us long to align ourselves with the purposes of His love, fulfill His purposes, and perform His works pre-established for us.

- **Scriptural Proofs**

1 Chron. 16:28-31 (NASB) Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

[29] Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him; Worship the Lord in holy array.

[30] Tremble before Him, all the earth; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.

[31] Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; And let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns."

1 Chron. 29:11 (NASB) "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O Lord, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all.

Psalm 148:13 (NASB) Let them praise the name of the Lord, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above earth and heaven.

Romans 11:36 (NASB) For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Romans 16:27 (NASB) to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

1 Cor. 6:20 (NASB) For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Cor. 10:31 (NASB) Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Ephes. 3:21 (NASB) to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

2 Thes. 1:11-12 (NASB) To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; [12] in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:11 (NASB) Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Jude 1:25 (NASB) to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Rev. 7:12 (NASB) saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

Rev. 15:4 (NASB) "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?
 For Thou alone art holy;
 For all the nations will come and worship before Thee,
 For Thy righteous acts have been revealed."

- **Our Problem with the Glory of God – Illustration and Explanation**

Since we are approaching the celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, putting on flesh, to live a perfect life, die on the cross and be raised from the dead, let us think about **WHY?** Why did God the Son do all that? Why did He humble Himself to flesh, suffer among us, die on a cruel cross, and three days later resurrect?

Some possible and correct (Biblical) answers in the Christmas context:

Matthew 1:21 (NASB) "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is **He who will save His people from their sins.**"

Matthew 1:23 (NASB) "Behold, the virgin shall be with CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A Son, and **they shall call His name Immanuel,**" which translated means, "**God with us.**"

Mark 1:8 (NASB) "I baptized you with water; but **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**"

Luke 1:32-33 (NASB) "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord **God will give Him the throne of His father David;** [33] **and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever;** and His kingdom will have no end."

John 1:29 (NASB) The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**

John 3:16-17 (NASB) "For **God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,** that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. [17] "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but **that the world should be saved through Him.**

What about other verses like:

Isaiah 53:5 (NASB) But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

Philip. 4:13 (NASB) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Philip. 4:19 (NASB) And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

- So, ***why did He come and die?***

One of the reasons that it is so hard to communicate or understand Biblical reality to modern, secular people is that the secular, fleshly mindset and the Biblical mindset start and move from radically different points. The difference is basically one of **man-centeredness versus God-centeredness.** It is **ME-ology against Theology!**

The secular and fleshly mindset is the one we were born with, the one that our flesh promotes constantly, the one that is reinforced and exalted by the world system or secular society every minute of every day, and the one that Satan and his demons are appealing to in every attack. Paul called this "**the mind that is set upon the flesh**" (in Rom. 8:6-7 that is "death" and "hostile toward God"), and described the "**natural man**" as one who "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them" (1Cor. 2:14). It is the mindset that Satan appealed to in Eve in the garden when he said "Indeed has God said...??" (questioning

Who God was and His word), and when he said “For God knows that ...you will be like God...” (appealing to her pride and self-worth).

What the secular mindset sees as problems are seen as problems because of how things fit or don't fit with the center – that is man (or us)! It is all about man, his rights, expectations and needs. And what are seen as failures or successes are seen as such because of how they fit with man's rights, needs, or expectations. This mindset is so much a part of us that **we take it for granted and don't even know that it is there.** That is **until it collides with another mindset** – the one in the Bible!

The Biblical mindset starts at a radically different starting point, namely God! It acknowledges that God is the basic reality in the universe. He existed before it or we did, He made it and us, and He is the issue, the most absolute reality! It starts with God Who has rights as the Creator of all things. He has goals as the Ordainer and Planner of all things. He has purposes as the Divine Sovereign over all things. So this Biblical mindset moves from this point and interprets the world and all that happens in it in light of God, His character, rights, goals, and purposes (whether known or unknown)!

So, back to the first question about why God sent His Son or why He came, notice how we immediately go to the reasons that relate to and revolve around us. And even may make some more (incorrect) reasons that apply to us to make us feel even better and worth more to God. Also, we should note that **not only does the answer** depend more upon God than us, but **even the question or problem is dependent upon Him** first rather than us. What determines the basic problem of the universe is not how to preserve man's rights (like self-determination or to have eternal life) and solve his problems (suffering, sickness, poverty, sin, the wrath of God, etc.)

Consider the two perspectives of the two mindsets in relation to the central event in human history – the death of the Son of God on **the cross.**

Romans 3:23-26 (NASB) for all have sinned and **fall short of the glory of God,** [24] being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25] whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; [26] for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

We are trying to go beyond justification and reconciliation and other means of our salvation, and get to the bottom of it all. This is what C.E.B. Cranfield called “the innermost meaning of the cross.” Or, we could ask, **“Did Christ die for us or for God?”**

So, from the text, why did God put Christ forward or publicly display Him as a propitiation? So the problem or issue was that God seemed or appeared to be unrighteous, and He wanted to vindicate or clear His name. He wanted to demonstrate

the absolute perfection of all His attributes, of justice and mercy (justifying sinners), of righteousness and grace, of wrath and mercy, of judgment and love.

What created this “problem” or issue is in the second half of v. 25, “**because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.**” God had been for centuries demonstrating forbearance and patience with the sins of man, not reacting as His character demanded and we deserved.

Psalm 103:10 (NASB) **He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.**

Consider the **example of David**. How he despised God and saw that his sin was against God, even before it was against Uriah and Bathsheba. And yet, God pardoned and “took away” his sin. How could He do that and be true to His nature? (THAT is “not fair!”)

2 Samuel 12:7-13 (NASB) **Nathan then said to David, "You are the man!** Thus says the Lord God of Israel, **'It is I** who anointed you king over Israel and **it is I** who delivered you from the hand of Saul. [8] **'I also gave you** your master's house and your master's wives into your care, and **I gave you** the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, **I would have added** to you many more things like these! [9] **'Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight?** You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. [10] 'Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' [11] "Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. [12] 'Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.' " [13] Then David said to Nathan, **"I have sinned against the Lord."** And Nathan said to David, **"The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.**

How many believers wrestle in mental anguish of the mystery of how a holy and righteous God can be kind to sinners? How can He send the rain on the just and the unjust? How can He forgive them when their sin is a threat to His righteousness?

Back in Romans 3:23, we see our sin as in conflict with the glory of God. Notice that sin is equal to “falling short of the glory of God.” That is the essence of sin, **failing to love God’s glory above everything else**. Imagine David’s reaction to Nathan saying he had despised God Himself. (He might have said, or You weren’t even in the picture.) **Yet, God and His glory was *the issue!***

Consider how we all have turned the gospel into a Divine delight in *us*, or into a Divine endorsement of our delight in many lesser things than God and His glory, like our delight in being made much of. Consider this question by John Piper in *God is the Gospel*, **“Do you feel more loved because God makes much of you, or because, at the cost of His Son, He enables you to enjoy making much of Him forever?”**

Most people cannot even imagine an alternate understanding of feeling loved other than feeling made much of. “But if His love for us is at bottom His making much of us, **who is really being praised?** We are willing to be God-centered, it seems, as long as God is man-centered. We are willing to boast in the cross as long as the cross is a witness to our worth.” Remember that we are talking about the *goal* of the gospel, not the *means*. (Many other means are certainly true and Biblical, but are not the ultimate goal – to see and savor God Himself!)

- Illustrated by parenting – If our children were asked what are your parents teaching you, or what is the goal of their training; they might respond “well, they want me to learn to brush my teeth, make up my room, not fight with my sister or brother, etc. When in reality the ultimate goal for us their maturity and independence as adults, and mature disciples for Christ. Those other things are just means to help train toward the goal. They are still important and true, it’s just that the bigger picture is not preached or explained so much. Likewise, much of the Scriptures are practical and about the means to God’s end or goal, which is always ultimately His glory and, for us, our participation in it.

The problem is also exposed in the question “**If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the (family and) friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters,...could you be satisfied with heaven if Christ was not there?”**

Are we being taught in such ways that the answer is always a NO? Do we pray and meditate in such a way to answer NO? Do we worship and praise God in such a way that the answer is NO? How should we change? What should we do?