

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE

Bible Study Notes #12, November 27, 2005

FOR GOD'S GLORY ALONE (*Soli Deo Gloria*) – Part 2

In part one last week, we saw how **this “sola” statement is the most foundational and primary to all the others.** If we begin with the glory of God alone, we will also inevitably end there. The teaching of this “sola” statement is **the most distinctive yet universal, final and yet foundational element** of all Reformed and Biblical doctrine.

And yet, we also noticed that 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. Even among those who accept the traditional “reformed” view of the Bible, **the full meaning of this statement is often missed and not understood.** 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!**

We also observed that the root words for “**glory**” help define it as God’s “**weight**” or “**worthiness**”, God’s favorable opinion, the true apprehension of God, or *what He is in unchanging and perfect essence and essentially!* It could also be viewed as **the outward manifestation of all the attributes of God!** As a verb form, “to glorify “(God) might be described as *an acknowledgement of Who God is and who we are!* We looked at some of the many Scriptural supports for this doctrine.

Seeing and savoring such glory inevitably leads true believers to **worship!** It not only drives us to **the ultimate priority (worship)** in life, it also fulfills **the ultimate purpose (glorifying and enjoying God)** in our life! It is the *Great Compulsion* of all true believers.

Most importantly, we saw how **we are handicapped from seeing and savoring the glory of God by our perspective and mindset.** As sinful, selfish, fallen and finite creatures we still **struggle with the “natural man”** that “does not accept the things of God” because they are often foolishness to us and we cannot understand them. This secular and natural mindset is focused upon our own rights, expectations, and needs; not God’s rights, goals, or purposes. We must receive and develop **the Biblical mindset that interprets the world and all that happens in it in light of God,** His character, rights, goals, and purposes (whether known or unknown)!

So we are struggling to have the right mind, the right perspective, the right focus and center (namely GOD) to attempt to understand some of these very deep and fundamental issues. In doing so, we can answer all of life’s important questions, such as: **“Where did we (and all creation) come from?” “What kind of God made us (and all there is)?” “Why did God make us (or anything there is)?” “What is our ultimate purpose in life?” “How do we achieve our ultimate purpose?”**

1. The Nature of God – Who is He?

If we are to be “God-centered,” **we must begin with GOD!** If we examine the nature of God from His Own revelations (natural and special), we are forced to acknowledge that He is **glorious!** His glory stems from the overwhelming and overflowing beauty of the sum total and perfect harmony of all His attributes and characteristics working together. God is perfect in holiness, justice, wisdom, power, grace, mercy, and love (to name just a few). **God is glorious and worthy of all glory!**

2. The Motive of God – Why does He do what He does?

God is not only glorious in His nature, His perfection and all His attributes; He is motivated by His glorious nature. His holiness demands that He love most that which is best – namely Himself! That is why there is no love that is not rooted in the ultimate love of the Father for the Son, the Son for the Father, the Spirit for the Son, etc. His righteousness demands that **His ultimate loyalty and motive for all He does is the manifestation and maintenance of His glory!**

- In other words, **all that God does, He does for His Own name sake.**

Ezekiel 36:20-23 (NASB) "When they came to the nations where they went, **they profaned My holy name**, because it was said of them, '**These are the people of the Lord; yet they have come out of His land.**' [21] **"But I had concern for My holy name**, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

[22] "Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, **"It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name**, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. [23] **"And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name** which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. **Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.**

- God **created all things** for His glory.

Psalms 19:1 (NASB) **The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.**

Psalms 104:31 (NASB) **Let the glory of the Lord endure forever; Let the Lord be glad in His works;**

Isaiah 6:3 (NASB) And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, **The whole earth is full of His glory.**"

- Specifically, **God created man** for His glory.

Isaiah 43:7 (NASB) Everyone who is called by My name,

And **whom I have created for My glory,**
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

Isaiah 43:21 (NASB) "**The people whom I formed for Myself,
Will declare My praise.**

- God **redeems sinful man** for the praise of His glory.

Ephes. 1:5-6 (NASB) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, [6] **to the praise of the glory of His grace,** which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Ephes. 1:12 (NASB) **to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.**

Ephes. 1:14 (NASB) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, **to the praise of His glory.**

Romans 3:26 (NASB) **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.

Romans 15:7 (NASB) Wherefore, accept one another, just as **Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.**

- God **empowers believers to live** for His glory.

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

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.

- God's **ultimate goal for His people** is that they might see and enjoy His glory forever. (as in the Westminster Confession)

John 17:24 (NASB) "Father, I desire **that they** also, whom Thou hast given Me, **be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory,** which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.

1 John 3:2 (NASB) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, **when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.**

Psalms 27:4 (NASB) One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek:
That **I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to meditate in His temple.**

- God's **ultimate goal for earth** is that it be filled with the glory of God.

Numbers 14:21 (NASB) but indeed, as I live, **all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.**

Habakkuk 2:14 (NASB) "For **the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord**, as the waters cover the sea.

- Illustration of an object lesson (1" motorcycle handlebar mount for a Garmin 76C GPS) – Anything made has a purpose in mind in its making. *Teleology* is the study of purposes or ends. Every time we act, we do so with a purpose in mind or seeking a particular goal.

3. **God's ultimate goal for creating, governing and redeeming is His glory!** (Glory is the purpose and the Bible is the Owner's manual!)

Go back to the passage in Isaiah 43, and read it in context:

Isaiah 43:1-7 (NASB)

But now, **thus says the Lord, your Creator**, O Jacob,
And **He who formed you, O Israel**, "**Do not fear**, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are Mine!
[2] "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you.
[3] "For I am the Lord your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I have given Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your place.
[4] "Since **you are precious in My sight**,
Since you are honored and I love you,
I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life.
[5] "**Do not fear**, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
And gather you from the west.
[6] "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'
Bring My sons from afar,
And My daughters from the ends of the earth,
[7] **Everyone who is called by My name**,
And whom I have created for My glory,
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

The main point is to encourage God's people (Israel) **to not fear** what man or nature can do to them, (as commanded in vv. 1 & 5). After each command He gives an argument to support the command. In vv. 1-4, He reminds them of what He has done

for them in the past. In vv. 5-7, He reminds them that the judgment of being dispersed into captivity is not His final word for them.

Verse 4 gets into **the heart of God** – What moves Him to help His people? As John said in 1 John 4:8, **God is love**, and that means that no matter how deep we probe into the heart of God we will never arrive at a layer that is not love!

But that raises another question. In order for them to be precious and loved, they had to be created and called.

- **What was His motive before they were a people, before He created or called them? Verse 7 gives the ultimate answer – God created Israel for His glory!**

That is the motive behind all that He does! He created Adam & Eve for His glory. Then man fell and He started His plan of redemption in time for His glory. He allowed the sinfulness of man to be completed until the tower of Babel. What made God angry and pour out some of His wrath on them, confounding them with languages?

Genesis 11:4 (NASB) And **they said**, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and **let us make for ourselves a name**; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

They (like Eve and Adam in the garden) **sought their own glory** and in pride wanted to **make a name for themselves**, instead of exalting God's name and glory. So God continued His plan in His sovereign choice of a single man, that would become a people:

Genesis 12:1-3 (NASB) Now the Lord said to Abram,
 "Go forth from your country,
 And from your relatives
 And from your father's house,
 To the land which I will show you;
 [2] And **I will make you a great nation,**
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
 And so you shall be a blessing;
 [3] And I will bless those who bless you,
 And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Man was made to rely on God and give Him glory. Instead man chose to rely on himself and seek his own glory. So God chose to bring forth a nation from one man and achieve His purpose through that man and his descendants. And so the cycle continues to this day. Man continually refuses to align himself with this goal, but God continues to create and call and redeem to see His purpose through to the end!

- Notice that God is **not using man to make Himself more glorious** (because He cannot be more “full”). It is rather that **His glory is somehow increased and manifested in and by us!**

Isaiah 43:21 (NASB) "**The people whom I formed for Myself, Will declare My praise.**

Isaiah 44:23 (NASB) **Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it!**
**For the Lord has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.**

Isaiah 48:9-11 (NASB) "**For the sake of My name** I delay My wrath,
 And **for My praise** I restrain it for you,
 In order not to cut you off.
 [10] "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;
 I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.
 [11] "**For My own sake, for My own sake,** I will act;
 For **how can My name be profaned?**
And My glory I will not give to another.

This is even more dramatically described in **Ezekiel:**

Ezekiel 36:21-32 (NASB) "**But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned** among the nations where they went.

[22] "Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, "**It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name,** which you have profaned among the nations where you went. [23] "**And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name** which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. **Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,**" declares the Lord God, "**when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.** [24] "**For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land.** [25] "**Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.** [26] "**Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.** [27] "**And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.** [28] "**And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.** [29] "**Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you.** [30] "**And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, that you may not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.** [31] "**Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.** [32] "**I am not doing this for your sake,**" declares the Lord God, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"

- **So, we are saved totally by God and God alone. And we are saved for God's glory alone! He will not share it with another!**

As expressed profoundly in Romans:

Romans 9:22-24 (NASB) What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? [23] **And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, [24] even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.**

Notice three dramatic points here:

1. We are “**vessels of mercy**” – This means **we do not deserve to be saved!** God is not saving us because of us or what we did. He is saving us on the basis of His mercy toward us! This should eliminate any and all boasting and pride. Mercy produces mercy and receives mercy again.
Matthew 5:7 (NASB) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
2. We are “**prepared beforehand for glory**” – This means that **we did not make ourselves fit** to know His glory, He did! Our ability to see and savor any of God’s glory is all because of His mercy and grace!
3. We are to “**make known the riches of His glory**” – This does **not mean a simple intellectual knowledge while feeling indifferent!** Oh, how it would change our lives to live in such knowledge that we are made to know the glory of God, to taste and see the glory of God, to treasure to glory of God, and to enjoy the glory of God!
 - **Therefore, we are to glory God alone inwardly as we see ourselves (our existence), our salvation, our worship, our delight and our purposes only in light of His purpose to bring more glory to Himself! Oh, that we might live in knowledge and possession of this fact!**

As Moses prayed in Exodus 33:13 and 18, we should pray and seek to “know the ways of God, that we may know God and find favor (grace) in His sight” and that God would “show us His glory!” It is internal and personal, intellectual knowledge and intimate passion!

- **What would change if we did live and think this way? Could we be satisfied with anything except God Himself as our treasure and goal?**

This ultimate motive and purpose is also achieved **outwardly**:

4. **God’s glory alone is also our ultimate motive in obedience and good deeds.**

Christ Himself said:

Matthew 5:16 (NASB) "Let your light shine **before men** in such a way **that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

Peter said:

1 Peter 2:12 (NASB) Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, **so that** in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, **they may on account of your good deeds**, as they observe them, **glorify God** in the day of visitation.

Paul taught the same in Titus 3:14, and James taught the same in James 1:27.

- **But HOW do we live in such a way as to glory God alone in our deeds? How do we do all things as to glorify God (1Cor. 10:31)?**

Go back to the passage in Peter's epistle:

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NASB) **As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.** [11] 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.

As taught in Galatians, the gospel is to **free us** to live for God! The truth is to set us free, not to put us into bondage again. So let us think, speak, and live in such a way that is relying upon Him. **Our dependence upon him ensures that He alone receives the glory** (for us and for others).

- Do we wake each day and view the principle of “for God’s glory alone” as a **burden** or “law” or requirement? Or do we wake and view the principle as a blessed **freedom and privilege**, granted and gifted by God, empowered and sustained by God?

This manner of living is the only way to live for **eternal rewards** versus temporal ones. Only those things done in Christ, or more specifically – done by Christ in and through us, will bring glory to God and last for eternity. That is the message of 1Cor. 3:4-15.

God gets glory not from our religious exertion and efforts, but from our **relational reliance** upon His strength; when we serve as one who serves with the strength that God supplies. Also note how the outward living to His glory compliments and strengthens the inward living to His glory! These are both interdependent and related.

God will Himself to glorify
Is not a weight
To make us sigh
For it is wings
To make us fly! (John Piper)

Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi: (second half)

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.