

1 Corinthians 10 (31) – The Essence of Glory & Sin

“The glory of God” and variations of that phrase are often used in the Bible, and in Christian conversations and preaching and teaching. We are told to “live for God’s glory”, we sing “I will glory in my Redeemer”, we pray that “God would get all the glory”, and we say that “God will get glory” out of a situation, or person, and things such as that.

So, what does “the glory of God” really mean? The biblical, essential meaning is that “God’s glory” is who He is. God’s glory is who God is. Therefore, when God is working on behalf of His glory or is demonstrating His glory, what He is doing is making Himself known. When God is receiving glory, it means that His name is made manifest, and that means His attributes, His character, and His nature are known and/or praised. Personally, to glorify God means to reveal or make clearer the glory of God by one’s actions and affections. This is what is happening when we live out His truth, especially by following Christ.

Throughout history, there have been many manifestations of God’s glory, but the essence of God’s glory is who God is, His nature. We find an example of this truth in Exodus 33:18-23. In response to Moses’ request, and before God passes by Him in a glorious manifestation, He proclaims His name. God does give Moses a physical manifestation of His glory (Exodus 34:5-7), but the essence of His glory is what God declared to Moses.

God’s eternal purpose is to reveal Himself – His name, His character, His attributes, and His nature. Through Jesus, God demonstrated His glory perfectly (Hebrews 1:3). Through salvation, God is showing who He is through His people. And we will find the true meaning of our existence as we learn to glory in His glory. God made us for this. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The essence of God’s glory is who God is.

In contrast, the essence of sin is the opposition to God’s glory. Sin is an attack on His glory. Anything that is not in line with the glory of God is a rejection of the glory of God. It is an attack on the distinct uniqueness of God, an assault on the holiness of God. This is the essence of what sin is. Every sin that I commit is an attack on God, an assault on His character, a denial of His authority, a rejection of His glory. Sin is a refusal to acknowledge God as God. It is dishonoring God by disobeying God. But people don’t think this through. They think to themselves or say to others that their sin “isn’t hurting anyone else”. But the truth is that all sin, at its heart, is an attack on God’s glory. This is why we speak of “the exceeding sinfulness of sin”. To show this truth, we can trace this “essence of sin” all the way back to the beginning.

Isaiah 14:12-14 – Lucifer thought that he would ascend to the place of the Almighty. He is rejecting the uniqueness of God. In his heart he thought that he could be like God. He lost sight of God’s glory, rejecting it, and imagining that he could rule in God’s place. It is obvious that the angels who fell along with Satan had also lost sight of the uniqueness of God. Lucifer’s rebellion and the demonic realm show us how deceived we can be, and also how we can be deceived.

Genesis 3:2-5 – When Satan tempted Adam and Eve, he was not just trying to get someone to sin. His goal in the garden was greater than that. Sin is an attack on the glory of God. God had declared what He had made “good”, and Satan wanted to destroy what God had declared. He was

trying to ruin something that reflected the glory of God, His creation, and the image of God in man. The bait he used was the same sin he had fallen for, “you will be like God”, a denial of God’s uniqueness. Adam’s rebellion shows us how Satan works in the world.

Matthew 4:1-11 – Satan tried this same tactic on Jesus. You can avoid the cross. You don’t have to follow the Father’s plan. You don’t have to do His will to reach the people; I can give you all the kingdoms of this world. Jesus could have demonstrated His deity in the ways Satan wanted Him to, but this would have been following the Devil’s plan, and denying His Father’s will. Of course, the idea of the Devil giving Jesus authority over the earth was also attacking God’s glory, His uniqueness. Satan was trying to ascend above God, by trying to get Jesus to worship him.

Psalms 51:4 – When David said to God, “Against you, you only, have I sinned”, we may get confused as to what this means. David certainly sinned against Bathsheba in taking her to commit adultery, and against her husband Uriah, whom he had murdered, and against Joab, whom he involved in his treachery, and against the nation of Israel, as well as God. However, think of this: since loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, is the greatest commandment (Mark 12:28-31), then it necessarily follows that failing to do so is the greatest sin, and opens the door to all lesser sins. All sin is ultimately against God.

Sin is an attack on the eternal purpose of God. It is a denial of the truth. Today, we see this essence of sin, this attack on the glory of God, played out everywhere. People are following the direction of the world, the designs of the devil, and the desires of our own nature (Ephesians 2:2-3). It is essentially an assertion of autonomy vs. authority, but it actually makes us a slave. Most people are convinced that autonomy is true freedom. People think that they are exercising their freedom when they say things like, “you can’t tell me what to do”, and “no one can control me”. But they are not exercising their freedom; they are exposing their bondage. Defiance, disobedience, and deception: people are addicted to the devil’s drug and they don’t even know it. There is no need for demons to chase you when you are already following their lead.

People that have not bowed the knee to Jesus Christ believe the lie of the devil. They think they can be autonomous, and are man-centered rather than God-centered. They seek out unnatural passions, and anything that makes them feel good they call good. They are out of God’s order, and deceived into doing and promoting all sorts of evil, since in their hearts they hate God. That is who we are in our sinful state. People might not think it, but defiant sin and unrepentant lives reveal whose side we are on. Sinful mankind is always waging an attack on God’s glory.

False religions and beliefs are an attack on the glory of God, and His uniqueness. Atheists say there is no God. New Age proponents say you are God. The polytheists say that there are many gods. The pantheists say that everything is god. The panentheists say that god is in everything. All these deny the unique place of God. Now the Jews are monotheists, but they deny Christ, who perfectly demonstrates the glory of God. The Muslims are also monotheists, but also deny the exclusive claims and atoning work of Christ. Their god doesn’t require 100% holiness for salvation, which is a denial of God’s glory.

As a remedy and response to all of this, what God is doing in salvation is vindicating His glory, in such a way that no one will be able to doubt the sinfulness of sin. Romans 3:23-26 – This

vindication of the value of God's own name, His nature, His character, His glory, was accomplished by having His Son die an atoning death on the cross. It was the only way that an attack on God's glory could be paid. No one else was ever worth it. It was the only way that God's people could be credited with perfect righteousness. The Gospel glorifies God, satisfies His justice, magnifies Christ and justifies the sinner.

The truth is that all have sinned; they have rebelled against the glory of God. All fall short; they do not measure up against the glory of God. The question you must answer is, "are you as good as God"? That is the standard you will be judged by. God is not just if He doesn't punish sin – but by having His Son come into the world, God could punish sin and pardon sinners, demonstrating His righteousness and His wrath, justice and mercy meeting together, upholding His holiness. In the end, and without Christ, all your attacks on God's glory will earn you nothing but hell. Salvation in Christ by submission to God is the solution.

In His eternal purpose, God has carried out our salvation in order to make Himself known. Ephesians 2:7 says that in the coming ages God is going to show the immeasurable riches of His grace towards us in Christ. The coming ages is now, but continues on without end, it is an eternal manifestation. It refers to what God has done and will be doing in and with believers in Christ. God's glory will be demonstrated and vindicated for eternity.

God's purpose is to reveal Himself, and in salvation, we have, are, and will reveal the glory of God. We are saved, and our salvation has three tenses to it. We were saved (we have been justified, we have received forgiveness, and we are saved from the penalty of sin). We are being saved (we have been sanctified, we have received the Holy Spirit, and we are saved from the power of sin). We will be saved (we have been glorified, we will receive the redemption of our bodies, and we be saved from the presence of sin, and perfectly reflect the glory of God). That's how God will reveal Himself throughout eternity with the eternal salvation of His people.

God has chosen a people who will live for His glory (cf. Matthew 5:16 / Ephesians 2:10 / 1 Peter 2:9). In this life we won't do this perfectly, but we must do this purposefully. Living for God's glory means that God is the controlling influence in your life, and that you consciously practice dying to simple self-interest, and instead focus on giving God glory through what you think, say, and do. It is being a faithful, fruitful, obedient, prayerful, joyful, submitted, thankful, disciple of Jesus Christ. It means living for Christ, winning others to Christ, and edifying our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our lives become worship (Romans 12:1-2).

To do all to the glory of God means that everything we do has an eye towards reflecting His truth, and manifesting His name. It is doing, thinking, and desiring things with the motivation to honor and please God. The more we focus on God's eternal purpose the more we will be shaped into the character of Christ (cf. Romans 8:14-18). And we will forever be showing forth the praises of God's name perfectly in eternity.

Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done, and great our rejoicing thru Jesus the Son; but purer, and higher, and greater will be, our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice! O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done!