

The Glory of God *and* Evangelism¹

"Now unto the King eternal...be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Tim. 1:17)

God's Priority

"I am the LORD: that is MY NAME: and **MY GLORY** will I not give to another, neither MY PRAISE to graven images....Let them give **GLORY** unto the LORD, and declare HIS PRAISE in the islands" (Isa. 42:8,12).

"But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and HE that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art MINE.... Even every one that is called by MY NAME: for I have created him for **MY GLORY**, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isa. 43:1,7).

"Ye are My witnesses, saith the LORD, and MY servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe ME, and understand that I am HE: before ME there was no God formed, neither shall there be after ME. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside ME there is no Saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are MY witnesses, saith the LORD, THAT I AM GOD" (Isa. 43:10-12).

"This people have I formed FOR MYSELF; they shall show forth MY PRAISE" (Isa. 43:21).

"For MINE OWN SAKE, even for MINE OWN SAKE, will I do it: for how should MY NAME be polluted? and I will not give **MY GLORY** unto another" (Isa. 48:11).

We need to be concerned about that which concerns God the most. There is nothing more important than understanding what is most important to God. God's priority must be our priority. We must understand what God is concerned about more than anything else.

Why am I here? What is the purpose of my existence? Why did I wake up this morning to face another day? Why did God save me? When He saved me, why didn't He take me immediately to Heaven to be with Himself? Why did God leave me here upon the earth for a time? For what purpose did God create me and for what purpose did God save me? "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and **FOR THY PLEASURE**, they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

Let us consider life's three most basic questions. They involve man's origin, man's purpose and man's destiny:

Question #1: *Where did I come from?*

--The issue of MAN'S ORIGIN

ANSWER TO QUESTION #1: The living God created me.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: "For by Him [God's eternal Son] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him" (Col. 1:16).

Question #2: *Why am I here?*

--The issue of MAN'S PURPOSE

ANSWER TO QUESTION #2: I am here to glorify God.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

Question #3: *Where am I going?*

--The issue of MAN'S DESTINY

ANSWER TO QUESTION #3: I am going to stand before the living God, my Judge, and give account to Him.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father....So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Phil. 2:9-11; Rom. 14:12).

In this paper we are concerned primarily about the second of these three questions, WHY AM I HERE? What is my purpose for being on this earth? What is it that my God wants me to do?

I once sat under the ministry of an evangelist, a preacher of the Gospel. I greatly respected this man and the Lord has used his ministry to bring numbers of people to the Saviour. One night from the pulpit this dear brother made the following statement: "**The reason God has left us here on the earth after He saved us is to win souls.**"

This statement, though uttered by a sincere servant of the Lord, is misleading. If he had said, "**One of the reasons** God has left us here on the earth after He saved us is to win souls," then there would have been no problem. But this is not what he said. He said, "**The reason** God has left us here is to win souls." This implies that the number one reason we are here is for the purpose of soul winning, and that soul winning is the one thing that God is concerned about more than anything else. Is this really true?

We would certainly agree that the salvation of the lost is of utmost concern to our blessed Lord whose own blood was shed to redeem lost sinners. In the Great Commission we are commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature and to make disciples of all nations. The salvation of the lost is very high on God's priority list because He is a God who desires all men to be saved and to come to a full-knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). The Lord Jesus is very much concerned for the salvation of the lost because He Himself said, "I am come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The Saviour of sinners is more concerned about the

salvation of souls than we will ever be. May God help us to share HIS COMPASSION for the sheep that are scattered, having no Shepherd (Matt. 9:36). May the Lord of the harvest be pleased to send workers into His harvest (Matt. 9:38)!

As important as soul winning is, it is not the number one reason why God has saved us and allowed us to remain on the earth. Ultimately and fundamentally there is but one reason why we are here and that reason is to **GLORIFY the God who saved us**: "that ye should SHOW FORTH THE PRAISES OF HIM who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). *One of the ways* I can glorify my God and my Saviour is by allowing Him to use me as a channel in reaching lost men and women with the glorious Gospel of a crucified and risen Saviour.

"Even every one that is called by MY NAME: for I have created him **for MY GLORY**, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isa. 43:7). As we consider this verse may we pause and reverently ponder the awesome implications of this statement. The chief and ultimate purpose in creation and in all that God does is His glory--the manifestation and demonstration of WHO HE IS. Do we dare make anything else our chief priority? God's glory is the very reason we are here. We need to be more concerned about God's glory than we are about anything else. "This people have I formed FOR MYSELF; they shall show forth MY PRAISE" (Isa. 43:21).

To fix our eyes upon anything less than the glory of God can only result in disaster: "for of Him [*He is the SOURCE*], and through Him [*He is the CHANNEL*], and to Him [*He is the GOAL*], are ALL THINGS: to whom be GLORY for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36). If we fail to understand this, then we are missing the most important piece of the puzzle. The entire puzzle of God's purpose and program fits together only when the piece representing God's glory is placed into its rightful position of preeminence. To elevate anyone or anything else to the sacred place reserved only for God's glory is strictly forbidden by the Lord Himself: "My glory will I not give to another" (Isa. 42:8 and see Isa. 48:11).

What was the Lord Jesus concerned about more than anything else? What did the Lord Jesus care about more than anything else? What did the Lord Jesus desire more than anything else? In John 17:1 the Lord Jesus said, "Father, the hour is come." He was speaking of the hour when the wrath of God would be poured out upon Himself on the cross. It was on the very next day that He would go to the cross to die in the place of sinners and provide salvation for lost men. Why did Christ go to the cross? Obviously He went to the cross to save sinful men. The Bible says so (1 Tim. 1:15)! But this is not the number one reason why Christ went to the cross.

His main reason for dying on the cross was to GLORIFY GOD: "These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, **that Thy Son also may glorify Thee**" (John 17:1). The Lord Jesus was more concerned about the glory of God than about anything else. One of the chief reasons Christ died on the cross was for the salvation of the lost, but the main reason was to glorify His Father.

What is God's chief priority? Is it the salvation of souls or the glory of God? A decision must be made and the decision will determine one's theology. To the covenant theologian, God's unifying and overall purpose is the redemption of men. The dispensationalist sees a higher purpose--THE GLORY OF GOD. Charles Ryrie speaks to this point:

No dispensationalist minimizes the importance of God's saving purpose in the world. But

whether it is God's total purpose or even His principal purpose is open to question. The dispensationalist sees a broader purpose in God's program for the world than salvation, and that purpose is His own glory. For the dispensationalist the glory of God is the governing principle and overall purpose, and the soteriological program (salvation program) is one of the principal means employed in bringing to pass the greatest demonstration of His own glory....the unifying principle of covenant theology is, in practice, soteriological. The unifying principle of normative dispensationalism is doxological, or the glory of God. (2)

The covenant theologian, in practice, believes this purpose [the underlying purpose of God in the world] to be salvation (although covenant theologians strongly emphasize the glory of God in their theology), and the dispensationalist says the purpose is broader than that; namely *the glory of God*....To the normative dispensationalist, the soteriological, or saving, program of God is not the only program but one of the means God is using in the total program of glorifying Himself. Scripture is not man-centered because His glory is the center. The Bible itself clearly teaches that salvation, important and wonderful as it is, is not an end in itself but is rather a means to the end of glorifying God (Eph. 1:6,12,14). (3)

The apostle Paul agreed that the redemption of man was subservient to a far greater purpose, even the glory of God:

(Eph. 1:6) "**To the praise of the GLORY of His grace**, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved [One]."

(Eph. 1:12) "That we should be **to the praise of His GLORY**, who first trusted in Christ."

(Eph. 1:14) "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, **unto the praise of His GLORY**."

(Eph. 3:21) "**Unto Him be GLORY in the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

God's glory is the manifestation and demonstration of WHO GOD IS. The living God is making Himself known. This is His great purpose and this is His great program. Even lost souls in the eternal lake of fire will bring glory to their Creator. Not all will be saved, most will be eternally punished in Hell, but all will glorify God.

Pastor Carlton Helgerson, in his paper *The Challenge of a New Religion*, made this important observation concerning one of the dangers facing evangelicalism:

Neo-evangelicalism professes to be most anxious to propagate the gospel. It claims that the chief purpose of God is the salvation of man. This is an error....This assumption is not only a mistake, it is a clever deception, for it places soteriology above everything else. It makes man, not God, the center of one's theology. Every Bible student ought to know that the chief purpose in all that God does...is His glory! The humanistic element that places man's salvation above the glory of God runs counter to what God has revealed. The salvation of souls is but one of the ways by which God is glorified. We must put His glory first. Any lesser motive, including reaching the lost, dishonors the Author of the written Word. (4)

If our **primary** concern is the salvation of the lost, then our whole approach is man-centered. If

our **primary** concern is for the glory of God, then our whole outlook and emphasis will be God-centered. The failure to see the glory of God as God's chief purpose has led to at least two serious errors of our day.

The first of these errors is to be found in the new evangelical camp. One of the great errors of new-evangelical groups is that they emphasize the doctrine of salvation above everything else:

Without question, both in expression of belief and in practice, the doctrine which is stressed most by the new evangelicalism is the doctrine of salvation. This doctrine with its individual and societal aspects seems to be to neo-evangelicals what the heart is to the human body. It is the vibrant, pulsating and life-giving center of the movement. Soteriology is the doctrine to which all others become subservient. ⁽⁵⁾

Thus we find the following attitudes:

"We must win souls at any cost" (even at the cost of disobeying Christ).

"The only thing that matters is that souls are saved!"

"We will use the world's music as a means of evangelism."

"Our witnesses will be football players, nightclub singers, political personalities and other famous celebrities, as long as they profess Christ, even though they may not live godly lives."

"We will work hand in hand with all denominations, with charismatic groups and with Roman Catholics."

"We will hold huge and expensive ecumenical conferences and congresses so that the world will be impressed by our unity and so that we can determine what the task of the church really is."

"To win the world for Christ, we will forget about our doctrinal differences and emphasize love and unity. To win the world for Christ we must bury our differences and proclaim the essential core of the Gospel in a positive way." ⁽⁶⁾

Before we pass too great a judgment upon new evangelicalism, let us consider the second serious error which is found within the fundamentalist camp. Within fundamentalism we find this same error--the error of elevating the salvation of souls above everything else. There are many fundamental churches today that are almost totally and exclusively evangelistic. From the pulpit flows a steady stream of salvation messages aimed at the unsaved. The sheep are not fed and the saints are not equipped. The result is there are thousands of "John 3:16 Christians" who know the way of salvation but who are horribly ignorant of the whole counsel of God. The truth of John 3:16 is marvelous and wonderful, but God has given us the 66 Books of the Bible so that we might learn how to glorify Him day by day.

Churches need to function **primarily** as edification centers and not **primarily** as evangelistic centers (1 Cor. 14; Eph. 4:11-16). We rejoice at every lost soul who attends a church service, hears the Gospel and comes to know Christ. However, the emphasis of the New Testament is not that we should bring the unsaved to the Gospel but that we should bring the Gospel to the

unsaved. Mark 16:15 does **not** say, "Go into all the world and invite people to come to church." The Scripture does teach, however, that when an unsaved person comes into a local church that is functioning as an edification center, he will fall down on his face and will worship God and will acknowledge that GOD IS IN THAT PLACE (see 1 Cor. 14:24-25). The genius of New Testament Christianity is that every believer is equipped for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12). These well-fed, spiritually robust believers will manifest the LIFE OF GOD (2 Cor. 4:10-11), with the primary result that God will be glorified (John 15:8) and the secondary result that souls will be saved. [\(7\)](#)

Consider some of the famous fundamental soul-winning churches of our day. The problem is the same. They have made the salvation of the lost their priority and chief goal. To reach this goal they will do almost anything. Many of these churches have turned to the use of shameful and degrading gimmicks-- offering fried chicken, free hamburgers and an opportunity for all the boys and girls to throw water balloons at the pastor's wife. "We will do anything for the sake of souls! We will do anything so that people will be drawn into our church and have the opportunity to be saved. Anything that brings them through the doors is acceptable."

A kind of carnival atmosphere pervades some churches today. It is the age of the "give away." "Ride our Sunday School bus. If you do, you may be the lucky one to discover a \$5.00 bill underneath your seat....One is sickened by the excesses to which some have gone today in their quest for additions to their rolls. It smacks of the flesh and degrades the gospel. The high and holy message of the cross has been dragged in the dust before the public eye....The church of Jesus Christ ought not to be made into a three-ring circus. The church that is preaching the Word of God in the power of the Spirit will be able to attract sinners and will see many of them saved without resorting to cheap and tawdry methods. [\(8\)](#)

The problem is very simple. We have lost sight of God. We have taken our eyes off the God who is adding to HIS CHURCH daily such as should be saved. He is building HIS CHURCH. He is the One who must give forth the increase. He is the God who alone can save. May He be pleased to use us as His instruments. What a privilege to co-labor with Him!

Elevating the glory of God above all else can be a great comfort to the believer who labors for Christ even on difficult mission fields:

The missionary knows, for example, that if he goes to the field for the glory of God, he will be sustained in adversity and retain courage if and when the visible results are few. For he knows he is there as a witness for the Lord and his ministry is for God's glory even when the gospel is rejected. Were this not so the missionary could not remain on his post.

The burden of the Epistles is to teach believers to allow the indwelling life of Jesus to be manifested, by which God receives glory. This has the priority. This revelation, received and yielded to, will produce the fruit of the Spirit by which God is glorified. God will perform the miracle of reproduction through these witnesses and for His glory. [\(9\)](#)

The purpose of this paper is not to minimize the awesome responsibility we have to preach the Gospel to every creature. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). [\(10\)](#) Our burden is simply that GOD'S GLORY might be our overriding concern. When God's people lay hold upon the living God, it is certain that believers will not be lax in Gospel outreach and

mission programs will not suffer. Rather the savor of the knowledge of God will be manifest in all places unto the glory and praise of God (2 Cor. 2:14-16).

In conclusion, it might be helpful to list some of the ways that we can glorify our God in our day-by-day walk with Him:

1. As we call upon Him in times of trouble (Psalm 50:15).
2. As we offer praise and thanksgiving to Him (Psalm 50:23).
3. As we exhibit God's light and life (Matt. 5:16).
4. As we pray in the proper way (John 14:13).
5. As we abide in Christ and bear fruit (John 15:8).
6. As we walk in the Spirit (John 16:13-14).
7. As we are of one mind with other believers (Rom. 15:5-6).
8. As we keep our bodies holy and pure (1 Cor. 6:20).
9. As we eat, drink, yea, in all that we do (1 Cor. 10:31).
10. As we are called home to be with Christ (John 21:19).

UNTO HIM BE GLORY in the church in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of the age of the ages! Amen! (Eph. 3:21, literal translation)

ENDNOTES

1. This article first appeared in *Divisive Theological Issues*, 1975 (revised 1995/96)
2. Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Moody Press, 1995), pages 93-94.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
4. Carlton Helgerson, *The Challenge of a New Religion*, pages 9-10. This booklet is available from the Middletown Bible Church for \$1.00.
5. Robert Lightner, *The New Evangelicalism*, p. 89.
6. See our paper entitled *The Importance of Doctrine and a Biblical Concept of Love* (Campus Crusade critique), 25¢.
7. See our paper, *The Purpose of the Local Assembly*, 5¢.
8. Ernest Pickering, *The Theology of Evangelism*, pages 46-47.

9. Carlton Helgerson, *The Challenge of a New Religion*, p. 10.

10. See our paper, *Twenty Passages from the New Testament Epistles Relating to Personal Evangelism*, 25¢.

The Middletown Bible Church, 349 East Street Middletown, CT 06457 (860) 346-0907