

## **YOUR STORY, HIS GLORY**

**Galatians 1:11-24**

**By Andy Manning**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. In 1646, during the bloodiest civil war in England's history, the parliament called an assembly of pastors and theologians (called "divines") to reform the doctrines of the Church of England. They met in Westminster, England, and they wrote six documents called the Westminster Standards. Three of the documents are still famous today: The Westminster Confession, the Westminster Larger Catechism, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism. These are still used today by Presbyterian and Reformed denominations around the world. The most famous of those three is the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which contains questions and answers that are simple enough for a child to memorize. And the most famous question and answer in the Shorter Catechism is Question 1: What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."
2. In other words, your purpose in life (chief end), the reason you are here, the thing that should be your main focus and goal, is to glorify God.
3. Your purpose is not to be happy; or to have fun; or to get rich; or to get famous; or to solve the world's problems. Your purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
4. **1 Corinthians 10:31** "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God."
5. It's helpful to know what you are on earth to do: glorify God. But it would be even more helpful to know what it means to glorify God.
6. Glorifying God can mean three things in Scripture.
  - i. First, it can simply be a synonym for praising God. To praise God is glorify Him.
  - ii. Second, it can mean giving God the credit. To give God the glory is to give Him the credit when you do anything good or admirable. We see athletes do this all the time when they are interviewed after a big win, and they say, "I just want to give the glory to God," or "I just want to thank God for this victory."
  - iii. Third, to glorify God can mean to reveal His glory through your life. God's glory is His attributes – His goodness and greatness. You glorify God when you show people God's goodness and greatness through your life; when you show God's love, and grace, and mercy, and compassion, and truthfulness, and faithfulness, and justice, and righteousness, etc.
  - iv. **John Piper** "He created us in His image so that we would image forth His glory in the world. We were made to be prisms refracting the light of God's glory into all of life." *Desiring God*, 57.

7. Today, we are going to learn more about how to glorify God by looking at the example of the Apostle Paul.

## II. CONTEXT

1. Remember the context of Galatians. Paul and Barnabas were sent out as missionaries by the church of Antioch. They started churches in Galatia, leading many Gentiles to Christ, and returned to celebrate the news. Then some men came to Antioch from the church in Jerusalem, claiming that it was not enough for Gentiles to have faith in Jesus for salvation; they also need to become Jewish. To settle the dispute, the church in Antioch sent a delegation, including Paul, to the apostles in Jerusalem. There the apostles sided with Paul, and sent him back with a letter. Paul went to the churches in Galatia to share the news of the decision, as well as to Antioch. But after Paul left the churches in Galatia some men followed him and told the Galatians the opposite, that the Gentile converts also needed to become Jewish. These men also spoke against Paul. In response, Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians.

## III. TEXT: Galatians 1:11-24

1. *11 For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. 12 For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ.*
2. *13 For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I intensely persecuted God's church and tried to destroy it. 14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. 15 But when God, who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone. 17 I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me; instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus.*
3. *18 Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas,, and I stayed with him fifteen days. 19 But I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20 I declare in the sight of God: I am not lying in what I write to you.*
4. *21 Afterward, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 I remained personally unknown to the Judean churches that are in Christ. 23 They simply kept hearing, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they glorified God because of me.*

## IV. EXPLANATION

1. Paul is defending himself from the Judaizers who had been speaking against him to the Galatians. In a nutshell his argument was that he got his gospel message directly from Jesus. He didn't talk to any of the apostles for the first three years. When he finally did talk to the apostles, they affirmed his message. But then he left Jerusalem and Judea. He said the churches in Judea didn't even know him personally. All they

knew was that the man who used to persecute the church now preaches the very faith he once tried to destroy.

2. Notice verse 24.
3. **Galatians 1:24** “And they glorified God because of me.”
4. What does it mean “they glorified God because of me”?
5. They praised God because of Paul. Remember, to glorify God can simply mean to praise God.
6. Why?
7. Because they saw God in Paul. They saw Jesus in Paul. They saw God’s glory shining through Paul. When they looked at Paul, they saw the evidence, the signs of God’s goodness and greatness.
8. What was it about Paul’s life that caused them to praise and glorify God?

## V. PAUL’S LIFE GLORIFIED GOD IN TWO WAYS

### 1. The love of God.

- i. What was Paul doing before he became a Christian?
  1. **Galatians 1:13** “For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I intensely persecuted God’s church and tried to destroy it.”
  2. Paul was a persecutor of Christians.
  3. Our first introduction to Paul is in Acts 7. That’s the story of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, a preacher who was stoned to death in Jerusalem for his faith. Who was there giving his consent? Saul.
  4. Right after the stoning of Stephen, a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and Saul was at the center of it.
  5. **Acts 8:3** “Saul, however, was ravaging the church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.”
  6. In fact, do you know the story of Paul’s conversion to Christianity? While he was traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus, Christ appeared to him in a vision. Guess what Christ’s first words to him were? “Saul, Saul, [he was also called Saul] why are you persecuting me (Acts 9:4)?” Do you know why Paul was going to Damascus?
  7. **Acts 9:1-2** “Now Saul was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.”
  8. When Saul encountered Christ and got saved, he was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians.
  9. Saul’s story can be summarized like this. God took primary enemy of Christianity, and instead of putting him to death, instead of casting

him into the hottest part of hell, God radically saved him, and then promoted him to be the primary preacher of Christianity.

10. That's love!

- ii. The Bible says much about mercy and the grace of God. It's been said that the mercy of God is when He doesn't give you what you deserve, and the grace of God is when He gives you what you don't deserve. We see both the mercy and the grace of God in Paul's life. God didn't give him the punishment that he deserved, and instead, gave him what he didn't deserve – salvation and a job as a preacher.
  - iii. I tried to think of an analogy, and this is the best I could come up with. This would be like the owner of a company who discovers that one of his employees has been stealing from the company – millions and millions, and not only does he not fire him, nor press charges, but he adopts him as his son, making his heir, and promotes him to CEO.
  - iv. When you look at Paul's life, you can see a prime example of the love of God. He loves us unconditionally. He loves us relentlessly. He pursues us. He forgives us. He is patient with us. He doesn't give us the penalty we deserve, but gives us blessings and honor that we don't deserve.
  - v. Paul's life also highlighted...
2. The power of God.
- i. Paul's transformation was amazing. He wasn't just a persecutor of Christians, he was a devout Jew – the most devoted you possibly be. He was an advanced Jew (Gal 1:14). He was a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, the strictest Jewish sect. The Pharisees made it their life purpose to never break God's law. First, they numbered all the rules in the Old Testament – 613. Then they created hundreds of extra rules to make sure you didn't even come close to breaking God's law. In regards to the law, Paul described himself as "blameless" (Phil 3:6)." On top of this, Paul's mentor in Judaism was Gamaliel, a very famous rabbi and Pharisee. Gamaliel was the president of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish governing body. Paul was as devout as you could be, and his friends were among the "Who's Who" in Judaism. But then Jesus saved him, and changed him from persecutor to Christian preacher. Consider the supernatural transformation that God brought about in Paul's life.
    - 1. Paul changed his religion. From Jew to Christian. This would be like a Roman Catholic monk becoming a Muslim.
    - 2. He changed his reputation. From Jewish elitist to Jewish outcast. This is like the transformation of Donald Trump who used to hobnob with all the elites in politics, and media, and entertainment, and now he's a pariah.

3. He changed his occupation. From tentmaker to missionary. This would be changing your career midlife, always a big decision.
  4. He changed his mission. He went from hunting Christians to making Christians. This is like going from being a drug dealer to DEA agent.
- ii. Think about the friend in your life who is the most unlikely to accept Christ. Maybe it's someone who thinks that religion is a crutch, and the reason people believe in a higher power is to comfort themselves; but they are strong enough to face reality that we're all just here by accident, there's no purpose to life, there's no God to turn to in times of trouble, and when we die we cease to exist. Or maybe they are convinced that the only reason people believe is because they are uneducated; they just haven't read enough, or thought deeply enough; but they are smart enough to know that that all this religion stuff is just a bunch of superstition. Or maybe they are just so worldly, so sinful, and they love their sin so much, that they don't want to have anything to do with religion. They don't even like to talk about it. Now imagine if that person not only accepts Christ, but their life radically changes, and they go into full-time vocational ministry. That's what happened to Paul.
  - iii. When people looked at Paul's life, they could see the power of God. Only God can perform that kind of change in someone's life. Only God.
  - iv. People glorified (praised) God because of Paul.
  - v. Why?
  - vi. Because when they saw Paul, they saw God. Paul's life highlighted the glory of God. Paul's life revealed the glory of God. His life showed the goodness and greatness of God.
  - vii. This is what it means to glorify God, and this is the chief end of man. This is your purpose in life: Your story, His glory. God wants your story to reveal His glory. God wants you to show the world who He is, and how wonderful and awesome is, through your life. God wants people to look at you and see Him.
  - viii. **John Piper** says that glorifying God means to display the worth God's person and the effect of His work. *What Jesus Demands*, p. 19.
  - ix. I like how pastor **James MacDonald** put it. To glorify God is "to display the superiority of a life lived in God." Show people how awesome it is to be a Christian. The amazing difference that Jesus Christ can make in your life.

## VI. HOW TO SHOW GOD'S GLORY THROUGH YOUR STORY

1. How do you glorify God like this in your daily life?
2. Martin Luther, the great Reformer, gave a great answer to this question. He said that every Christian is called to be Christ to his neighbor. In other words, your life needs to be so conformed to the will of God and the character of God that when people look at you, they see God's character reflected in your life.

3. Be Christ to your neighbors. Your mission in life is to show everyone what Jesus is like. When they look at you, let them see Jesus.
4. Some people have a passion to be unique; to stand out; to be different from the norm. Other people desperately want to fit in; they want to look like everyone else. But our goal as Christians is not to be different, or to fit in, but to be like Christ.
5. Have you heard of Megan Rapinoe? She is one of the leaders of the United States women's soccer team. She has developed a reputation for kneeling during the national anthem. It is a statement of condemnation against our nation for being unjust and discriminatory and violent against black people. In our country we have freedom of speech, and I support that, but when you put on that USA jersey, you are not longer representing yourself. You are representing the entire country, and therefore you need to live and act in a way that makes the country look good. That's the same thing with a Christian. When you become a Christian, you put on a Jesus jersey, and your life is no longer about you. You have a higher purpose. Your responsibility is to live in a way that makes Him look good. And you do that by imitating Him.

#### **VII. HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE GLORIFYING GOD**

1. How do you know if you are succeeding at glorifying God? There's a simple test, a question you can ask. Are people glorifying/praising God because of you?
2. If you are truly living for the glory of God, then there will be people in your life who are praising God because of you. They are praising God because they see God in you; because God is ministering to them through you; because they see the power of God in your life.
3. Let me ask you a more pointed question: Who is praising God because of you? Because they can see the love of God in you; the power of God; the generosity of God; to faithfulness of God; the kindness of God?

#### **VIII. CONCLUSION**

1. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. That's your purpose in life. But you can't live for the glory of God until you get saved; until you accept Jesus into your life as your Lord and Savior. Because then Christ comes to live in your heart and empowers you to live for Him.
2. Are you sure that you are going to heaven? Are you sure that Jesus lives in your heart? If not, you can be. It's as simple as ABC.
  - i. Admit you are a sinner.
  - ii. Believe in Jesus, that He died for your sins and rose again.
  - iii. Call on Him to be your Savior and boss. Ask His forgiveness, and ask Him to take the steering wheel of your life.