

Foundations of Grace, Part 1: The Glory of God

Selected Scriptures

80-337

There are a few weeks now before the celebration of the fortieth year here and it seems to me that those 40 years have passed very rapidly since that second Sunday in February of 1969 when I came here in my twenties. And I really only had one qualification to be the pastor of this church and it was this, the two prior pastors had died of a heart attack and the church was supporting both widows. And they said, "Get a young one." They really didn't want another widow to support or another pastor to die, so they just wanted somebody who would last a while. Little did they know that I would last this long.

But in those early years when I came to Grace Church, that first Sunday was very unforgettable to me, over in the chapel. There was only the chapel and that small building and I have lived, as many of you have, through the years of seeing the hand of God on this church. And I just want you to know, I need to do a peremptory strike before we get to the first Sunday of February and you get confused about the reason this church is what it is, and it's not me. I will accept the gratitude and the love and affection that comes that day, but before you ever get there, I want to tell you the real reason why this church is what it is, and it is not because of me. It is because of truth...it is because of truth and some particular truths that have been the guideposts, the fixed points, the landing lights that have never moved and never changed to which all of us have directed our ministries and our lives for these 40 years.

You know, I came out of seminary, I would confess to you that I was somewhat confused about what ministry should look like. It wasn't that I was confused about the Trinity, or the deity of Christ, or any of the great doctrines of Scripture, or about the authority of Scripture itself. I was absolutely not confused about that. But as to what was crucial to ministry, I really wasn't very sure. I had struggled to find foundational truths for the Christian life as opposed to some things that are marginal or peripheral. I had struggled to grasp what I thought must be the core understandings. I had struggled to understand what the church should be and how the church should operate. I had been exposed to so much and none of it seemed to me to be distinctively biblical, even that which I studied in my education as well as what I experienced in growing up in a pastor's house and seeing church after church after church.

When I came out of seminary, the Lord knew I wasn't yet ready to begin a ministry because I was unformed, even though I had the tools to get the answers, I didn't have the answers. And I really didn't want from the Lord's viewpoint be pressed upon a church not knowing what direction to take that church. That's probably why when I came out of seminary I candidated a couple of churches and they turned me down. They thought that I was too young and too inexperienced and they were right.

So, it was five years after I finished seminary before the Lord brought me here to Grace Church. And during those five years, I worked and I struggled with the Word of God to come up with the

foundational things that I felt you had to have in place if you're going to go in the right direction as a church. It had to do with spiritual life, personal, individual, spiritual life. I had to know what God required of my life so that it could be a pattern and an example for others. I had to understand the gospel and the truth of the gospel and the glory of the gospel because I was convinced churches were full of people who weren't saved and that the gospel was preached in a superficial way. And I had to understand what the church was to be and what the Holy Spirit had revealed that a church had to be.

So those were the things that I was grappling with. And by the time that February, 1969 arrived, I showed up here and those things had taken a seminal form in my mind and the first sermon I preached here was on the Lordship of Christ. And that has been a benchmark for my ministry for all these 40 years. I've written probably a half a dozen books on that subject alone. But that first sermon was Matthew 7, "Many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' and then will I say to them, 'Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you.'" And the first sermon I ever preached here was a sermon on the fact that if you have not truly acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord, you're going to be rejected at the judgment. Not exactly a warm and fuzzy welcome sermon, I might add.

The second Sunday I was here I preached a sermon called, "The Ideal Church." I don't suppose when I came out of seminary I had any idea what an ideal church looked like. So it was in those years that I was struggling to understand New Testament ecclesiology, what the Holy Spirit said the church should be and what the church that the Holy Spirit moved through looked like that all of that took shape.

Before that first year was over, I did a series on, "The Glory of God." And after I did that series, out of that came the first book I ever wrote, and it opened with a section on the glory of God, Keys to Spiritual Growth it became known as.

And I remember saying to Patricia and to others around me that I could go to heaven because I had discharged my soul on the most important subject I would ever speak on, or write on...the glory of God.

And so, as I have thought about coming up to this event, and I'm sure I'm going to be very embarrassed. In fact, I told Rick I may not come. I just need to do a peremptory strike and let you know that I will never be the explanation for this church. The explanation for this church is its commitment to these truths that are foundational and from which we have never wavered and you have never wavered, that's why you're here. And this is my three weeks to thank you and to thank the leaders of this church, the elders of this church, shepherds and pastors of this church past and present for their love for these truths. And since I have three weeks, it kind of boils down to this, "The Glory of God, the Lordship of Christ and the Holy Spirit's design for the church," those were the three things the Lord allowed me to have in my mind and to put in place when I came that had never changed, fixed points that have never been altered. It is to these that I have directed all my efforts and all my focus and all my teaching. They are far-reaching.

And I thought it might be interesting for me to go back and look at how I viewed those things in the beginning. And so, I'm going to talk to you today about the glory of God from the perspective that I had 40 years ago. And then next week I'm going to talk about the Lordship of Christ from the perspective I had 40 years ago. A lot has filled up that rather limited understanding and some of that is going to come out. And then the third Sunday I'm going to talk to you about how I understood the

Holy Spirit's design for the church 40 years ago. And you will see that these things are still our priorities. You hear them in your Sunday-School classes, they weave their way into the curriculum in the children's division, the youth ministry. They are the fixed points.

Now in order to have some integrity with the past, I was digging through this week my old notebooks and I found some old notes on glorifying God. I don't know when I wrote these, long ago in that first year. I wrote them on the front side of stationery that I took out of the drawer of the Holiday Inn in Cascade Plaza, Akron, Ohio. I don't remember being in Akron, Ohio. But then I don't remember a lot of things. But apparently at that time when God was shaping these things in my mind, I was in Akron, Ohio. And I was thinking about the ultimate end of everything being to glorify God. I understand what the catechisms have always said, the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. And I'm well aware of 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, including the most mundane thing, the most routine thing of eating and drinking." I did understand that the sweeping purpose of everything was that God would be glorified, as I read in Ephesians 1, that everything is to the praise of His glory.

And so, I began to write down what that meant. How could I live my life to His glory? How could I teach others to live their lives to His glory. What did that look like? It wasn't complicated. I just went through the Bible from the front to the back and found everything the Bible said about how we glorify God. I started with the word "glory" and the word "glorify" and I just chased them everywhere in Scripture. And I began to write down many things.

My understanding was somewhat limited, that's why it's just this. If I were to do it again, it would be a five-month series, as you well know. But I will spare you that.

The reason for our existence is to know and glorify God. The reason for creation is that God may be glorified. The purpose of the universe is to create a theater in which God can redeem a humanity who will be drawn into His presence to glorify Him forever and ever. Everything is about glorifying God. The heavens declare the glory of God. Isaiah 43:20, "The beast of the field gives Me glory." The only rebel in the universe is man and the indictment on man is in Romans 1:21, "When they knew God they glorified Him not as God."

There are only two kinds of people in the world, the people who glorify God and the people who don't. The people who glorify God end up in heaven. The people who do not glorify God end up in hell. Glorifying God is the purpose for everything.

It's a tragic thing not to glorify God. I always think of Herod in Acts 12 who wanted glory for himself. So he declared Herod Day in the amphitheater, Caesarea, put on his royal robe, elevated himself on the throne, had all the people hail him as he gave a speech and the people responded by saying, "It's the voice of a god, not a man." Just what he wanted to hear. And this is how Herod Day ended. "And the Lord struck him and he was eaten by worms and died." Not exactly the planned end of Herod Day. Why? Because he gave not God the glory.

And I remember that from the fourth chapter of Daniel where Nebuchadnezzar tried to take glory to himself and God turned him into a beast for years. Glorifying God is the heart of everything. Living a life to the glory of God is the reason that God has saved us, Christ has redeemed us.

But how do we do that? How practically do I live my life to the glory of God? How can I be to the praise of His glory? It is to the praise of His glory, as we read in Ephesians 1, that He chose us. It is to the praise of His glory that He loved us, that He adopted us, that He instructed us, as He gave us truth. It is to the praise of His glory that He sealed us with the Spirit under an eternal hope and an unending inheritance. It is to the praise of His glory that He has done all these things. I cannot add to His innate glory. I cannot add to His attributes. But I can give Him honor that He is do. How do I do that? How do I adorn the doctrine of God with my life?

And somewhere, maybe in Akron, Ohio or maybe somewhere else, after I had been in Akron, Ohio and got these little pieces of paper, I began to write things down and the first thing, and this is the order I wrote them in...by the way, I only spent about...I don't know...fifteen minutes going over this cause I wanted to see what would happen if I just kind of took it this way and what would come to mind and the order is the way I would do it again, I think.

The first way that we glorify God is by confessing Jesus as Lord...by confessing Jesus as Lord. In Philippians chapter 2 there is that great passage of the self-emptying humiliation of Jesus, the condescension of Jesus in which He exists in the morph of God but doesn't regard that as something to be held on to or grasped, or emptied Himself, verse 7, takes the form of a slave, becomes made in the likeness of men, the appearance of a man He humbles Himself all the way down to the point of death on a cross. And in response for this reason, God highly exalted Him, bestowed on Him the name which is above every name which is the name Kurios, Lord, so that at the name of Jesus which is Lord, every knee will bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...and here's the reason, to the glory of God the Father.

You cannot ever glorify God unless you start by confessing Jesus as Lord. That's the starting point. You can never live a life that glorifies God apart from confessing Jesus as Lord. That is what Romans 10:9 and 10 says, "If you confess Jesus as Lord with your mouth while believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." This we know to be a divine miracle, 1 Corinthians 12:3, "No man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit." But this is the foundation of glorifying God. You confess Jesus as Lord, He is kurios, you are doulos. In fact, in Romans chapter 1 Paul said that we preach obedience to the faith for the sake of the name. And in 3 John, John writes that we should care for those who are worthy preachers of the gospel, for they do it for the sake of the name. Everything is for the sake of the name, for the glory of God.

In the words of Jesus which are unmistakable in John 5 and verse 23, He said, "So that all honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father." You cannot glorify God unless you glorify Christ. You cannot honor the Father unless you give honor to the Son. You cannot affirm God unless you affirm the Son of God. He is Lord, He is the only Savior, the only Redeemer. There's not one person in the history of the world who can glorify God at all apart from acknowledging Jesus as Lord. This is the beginning point to the glorying of God.

In the thirteenth chapter of John, verse 31, "Therefore when He had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him.' If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself." In other words, they're inextricable. They are linked together. The glory of God is tied to the glory of His Son. I knew that at the very beginning if anyone was to glorify God, it would be through the acknowledging through the acknowledging of the Son of God as Lord. You remember at His baptism, the Father said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased." On another

occasion the Father said, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him." The greatest testimony ever given concerning Jesus, greater than the testimony of His words and His works was the testimony from heaven by His Father. And when you acknowledge that the testimony of the Father is true, you give glory to the Father. If you reject the Son, then you diminish the testimony of the Father. You dishonor the Father by denying the truth of His affirmation of the Son. This church has never wavered in its life, never wavered from an acknowledgment that we affirm that what the Father has declared to be true about Christ is in fact true. And we honor the Son and therefore we honor the Father.

The focus of this church has always been God-ward. That is why we don't jump on every bandwagon that rolls across our path. That is why we don't deviate from the Word of God. Our focus is God-ward. It is Christ-centered. It always has been, it always will be. We've never been trendy. We never will be. We never can be because we are focused on the unchanging glory of God and the unchanging reality of Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

I remember in those early years I had read a biography of Henry Martin, a missionary to India. I wrote that down here. And he first was in a pagan temple, Hindu temple when he arrived in India. And his first experience in that place was horrific. And I can understand it because I've been in those places. And he turned and ran out after just a few moments and he picked up his little diary and he wrote this, "I cannot endure existence if Jesus is to be so dishonored." And he wept.

I think we understand that as a church. We're committed to the honor of Christ which honors the Father who affirms the reality of His Son as the one and only Savior and Redeemer.

Secondly, I wrote this down. If you're going to glorify God, first you confess Jesus as Lord, secondly, you have to aim your life at that purpose...you have to aim your life at that purpose. That seems kind of obvious but all I mean by that is you have to focus on glorifying God, not on you, or not on your circumstances, or not on some other inanimate objective, but your focus is on the glory of God. You aim your life at that purpose and that's back to 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." This is the all-consuming desire. This has been the relentless focus of my mind through all the years of ministry, what would glorify God? What would glorify God? How can I glorify God? By what means can I glorify God in this situation, in that situation?

Sometimes people ask me about the consequences of a certain ministry or the consequences of a certain message or the fact that what I say sometimes in a public media setting is offensive to people, they ask me...Does this concern you? Does this bother you? And it may seem a little bit simplistic but it's what my focus is...I only seek to do what glorifies God. And in the end, that has some very important sort of supporting concepts in my mind. One, it means that you do it at any cost...you do it at any cost. Do you remember the words of Jesus in John 21 when he was talking to Peter? He was telling Peter at the end of that chapter, which is the end of the gospel of John, that Peter had lived a fairly free and easy life when he was young. You have gone where you wanted to go and done what you've wanted to do. But He says to him, "The time will come when people are going to bind you and they're going to take you where you don't want to go and they're going to do to you what you don't want done." And what He's talking about, of course, is the future arrest and crucifixion of Peter. And then John comments on that in verse 19 of John 21 by saying, "This He said, signifying by what death Peter would glorify God."

So, the point being, you glorify God when you aim your life at that purpose, no matter what the result...no matter what the cost. This is taking up your cross, right? This is denying yourself. That is

why...that is why this church has never been preoccupied with its own comforts. That is why you have never been a congregation of people who come here expecting somehow to be personally elevated in your own feelings about yourself, but rather you have come here understanding that the glory of God is the all-consuming reality. And if it cost you everything, that is worth the price. That's why Peter could say, you know, before his life ended when he wrote 1 Peter chapter 4:14 to 16 that when you suffer for righteousness sake, the spirit of grace and glory rests on you and you glorify God when you suffer.

So I've always known that if you're going to aim your life at that purpose, and I will admit, I'm still waiting for the suffering. This last week I read the biography of Hudson Taylor, I hadn't read it before, this was the one written by his son. And I kept saying all the way through, the suffering, the suffering, the suffering. He goes to China all by himself. Doesn't know where his next meal is going to come from. Buries his sweet little Gracie, buries a little son that's a few days old after his wife gives birth. And then a few days later, his wife dies, puts her to rest. Suffering is relentless and endless, and endless, and endless. But the exuberance is just overwhelming because of his confidence in God at any cost...at any cost.

It also means that if you're going to aim your life at that purpose, that there's no price too high to pay for the glory of God. It also means that you suffer when God is dishonored. And this is something that I think I understood...well I certainly understood it long, long ago because I wrote this down. And I had been reading through the Psalms and I had come to Psalm 69 where David says, and it's also a messianic prophecy, "Zeal for Your house has eaten me up." Pretty remarkable. I'm so passionate about Your house, Your temple, You, Your honor, Your worship, Your adoration, Your praise that it eats me up. I'm consumed with Your glory. And then he says, "The reproaches that fall on You fall on me," which means when You're dishonored, I feel the pain. When You're dishonored, I suffer.

And then Jesus, you know, John 2 starts His ministry by going into the temple and He says, "You've turned this place into a cave of robbers." And He makes a whip and He wipes out the place. Psalm 69:9, "Zeal for Your house is eating me up, the reproaches that have fallen on You have fallen on me." And what it means is this, when you're living your life to the glory of God, you will glorify God no matter what it costs. And secondly, you feel the pain when He is dishonored.

You know, sometimes people have said to me, "You're not as funny as you used to be." I used to work hard at kind of being humorous when I worked with kids in the younger years in my ministry. No, I'm not as funny as I used to be because life isn't as funny as it used to be because I have lived all these many years, I've been preaching now for 50 years and I have seen God dishonored and dishonored and dishonored and dishonored and dishonored and many times in the name of Jesus Christ. And the accumulative effect of this is a very great burden of suffering. It's a kind of suffering that I don't know it the way I should know it, I don't feel the pain the way the pain should be felt. I don't have as great an honoring of God in my heart as I wish I had but I do suffer when the Lord is dishonored, when He's misrepresented, when He's mocked, scorned, mistreated. That's why I have a very low tolerance of some kinds of preaching which manipulates and dishonors His Word, or living, or things that trivialize the sacred.

There's a third element in this idea of aiming your life at that purpose that came to me when I wrote this down. You aim your life at that purpose which means you glorify God no matter what the cost, which means you feel the pain when He is dishonored, but thirdly, it means you're content to be outdone by others as long as He is glorified. Now there just seems to be so much competition in

ministry. Look, I grew up with competition. I was an athlete all my young life, all through my university college days. I understood competition. I understood the idea of competition was “I beat you! You lose, I win!” I understood that. That’s what it’s all about. I was not the kind of person who said, “It’s not whether you win or lose, it’s how you play the game.” Baloney. It’s whether you win or lose. You don’t pick up the daily sports and it says, “So-and-so played a nice game.” It doesn’t say that. It says, “Somebody won...and Somebody lost.” That’s the way it is. We are wired in our fallenness. We are wired in our pride for victory. We are wired for the ego fulfillment. It comes with that and so much of that fallen pride comes into the Kingdom and there can be jealousies and strife and envy and I never wanted that. And I understood early on that if your heart is right and all that matters to you is that God is being glorified, then you’re content if He’s glorified even if someone else is honored above you.

And what led me to, I think, the simplest and clearest understanding of this was Philippians 1. Without question, the Apostle Paul is the great light, the great gospel light of his era. There’s nobody even close. And as he writes to the Philippians he is in prison, he has been, in that sense, put in a very difficult position. There are people who know that he’s a prisoner because the Lord is using him there for the advancement of the gospel. And by the way, during his imprisonment, the gospel did wonderfully advance as the end of Philippians says in verse 22 of chapter 4, “All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.” So while he was a prisoner, he was leading those in Caesar’s household to the knowledge of Christ.

So, his imprisonment did work out for the advancement of the gospel. But there were others who jealous of Paul who had animosity toward Paul because he was everybody’s favorite, the most beloved and the most used, they wanted to spread the idea that he was in prison because he had failed somehow, perhaps a moral failure, perhaps some kind of carnal failure, perhaps he had reached a point of usefulness, whatever it was, the Lord had put him on a shelf and now everybody ought to turn away from Paul and turn to this new breed. They were disdainful of the Apostle Paul and condemning of his condition. It is to this that he speaks in verse 15. He says, “There are some preachers out there, some, to be sure, who are preaching Christ even from envy and strife.” He knew that. He knew there were people who were jealous of him, jealous of the way he had been used of God, jealous of his gifts and skills and opportunities and impact. There were also some, he says in verse 15, who preached from good will. They affirmed me, they love me, they support me. “The latter, those with good will, do it out of love.” He means for him. “Knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.” That is they know that I am not unfaithful, that I am preaching and defending the gospel. And that’s why I’m in the condition I’m in.

“The former, however,” verse 17, “those who preach from envy and strife, proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives.” What an ugly thing that is. Of all places where selfish ambition, strife and envy should show up, it shouldn’t be in the ministry of the gospel. They want to hurt me more. They’re trying to cause me distress in my imprisonment, which means they’re trying to add wounds to my already wounded condition.

What’s his response to this? Eighteen...what then? My response, “Only that in every way whether in pretense or in truth Christ is proclaimed and in this I rejoice.” Emphatically yes, and I will rejoice. I will never let the human element become the issue. I will never let whoever gets the credit become the issue. Christ is preached and in that I will rejoice no matter what their attitude is toward me.

That’s what it means....you know, you live in your life to the glory of God when you would pay any

price for His glory, when you feel the pain when He is dishonored, that's the negative side. And on the other side, when you're content to be outdone by people who do what you do with more blessing than you do it. You're consumed then with the glory of God.

I wrote down a third, and I would probably put them in the very same order. We glorify God by confessing sin...we glorify God by confessing sin. In the book of Joshua when the children of Israel were being brought into the land by the great power of God, you all remember the story of Achan, right? Achan, who disobediently took the spoils, brought them back and buried them in his tent when the people of Israel had been commanded to take no spoil. And there is a remarkable and, I think, very formative moment there that we need to understand, it's in the seventh chapter. If you want to look at it for just a brief moment.

He is confronted by Joshua in verse 19. And this is what Joshua says to Achan. "My son, I implore you...and then this...give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel. Give praise to Him." How do I do that? How do I do that? Here's how, "Tell me now what you have done, do not hide it from me." The third way you glorify God is by confessing sin...confessing sin. Give glory to the Lord God of Israel. Give praise to Him by telling what you have done. Do not hide it. "So Achan answered Joshua and said, 'Truly I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, and this is what I did.'" And he said what he did. And then verse 24 says, "Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan, the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantle, the bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, all that belonged to him, brought them up to the valley of Achor. Joshua said, 'Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day and all Israel stoned them with stones and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.'"

Wow! All the people, all the possessions, all the animals. But before the act of judgment fell, God was to be glorified by a confession of sin that showed that the judgment was a righteous judgment and therefore God was vindicated. You give glory to God when you confess your sin so that the chastening that comes into your life is seen as a just act by God. When you deny your sin, when you hide your sin, when you will not confess your sin and your sinfulness and things come into your life that are troublesome that are the chastening of God, you would tend to blame God and to think God unfair. But where there is a heart of true and pure and honest confession of sin, there is a readiness to accept the chastening of God as that which is deserved. Confess your sin.

Psalm 51, early in the ministry here, I preached a message on Psalm 51, "Against Thee only have I sinned...against Thee only have I sinned." He had sinned against Uriah, he had sinned against Bathsheba, but in his mind it was really all against God. And all David ever asked for at that point was that the chastening have an end, for it was a just chastening, that it have an end and that he received back the restoration of the joy of his salvation. Confession is to admit your sin, to repent for your sin, and to give honor to God if God decides to chasten your sin.

You know, this is such a pervasive attitude in life, it seems to me that a person who really understands the horror of sin could never complain about anything that came into their life in a negative way because all of it could be perceived legitimately as chastening from the Lord. Are we perfect? And if we're sinful, and we are, and if we're regularly sinful and we are, then who are we to think that we should pass through some long period of time in our lives without any trouble? It's a wonderful thing to confess your sin and to be able to worship God in the midst of the most difficult issues and situations of life knowing that this is what you deserve and that God's purpose in it is the purpose of a Father who wants to chasten a son so you can move in the path of righteousness.

Then I wrote down, "We glorify God by trusting Him." And I drew that out of Romans 4. Romans 4 is the great section on Abraham and says about Abraham in verse 19 that he was not weak in faith. Even though he contemplated his own body. Now remember, God said you're going to have a son, right? And he realizes that he's a hundred years old and Sarah's womb is dead. She's in her nineties, never borne children. But he is not weak in faith. God says you're going to have a son. He believes it even though humanly it is not possible. So verse 20 says, "With respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God." God is glorified when you believe His promise.

That is what sustained Hudson Taylor. Goes to China by himself, this little guy, not remarkable in any way. And goes purely on the basis that he was going to pray that God would provide his needs. Prayed for a place to stay. Prayed for protection and safety. Prayed for the next meal. And did that for 50 years. And by the time he came to the end of his life, he had 750 missionaries in China from the United States and England and about 5,000 Chinese workers and they were all operating on the same basis, faith and prayer and no fixed promises. Time after time after time after time after time he took God at His word. He believed God. He believed God. And God vindicated Himself, and vindicated Himself and vindicated Himself and did a massive mighty work so that today the millions of Christians in China today can trace their spiritual heritage back to Hudson Taylor. Trusting God.

You remember the great hero chapter of Hebrews 11? "By faith...by faith..by faith...by faith...by faith." Trusting God is simply saying I believe that what God says, He will do. You know, if you say, "I'm a Christian, I believe in God, God is sovereign over my life, God provides everything I need," and you're a picture of fretting and worrying and anxiety and fear and reaction and over-reaction, that's a terrible contradiction. Do you really believe? Do you really trust? Do you really believe that the Lord is going to sustain you? That my God will supply all your needs according to His riches and glory by Christ Jesus? Then act like it. Then let prayer be your response to difficulty. I certainly was indicted all the way reading this book because I'm not looking for where I'm going to get my next meal. You know, we have a little bit of a problem in our economy here, people start killing themselves. We need to learn as Christians to demonstrate the kind of trust that is exhibited in the direst of circumstances because we believe that God can be taken at His Word...like Abraham.

And then I wrote down, "By fruitfulness...by fruitfulness." In John 15 Jesus talks about the vine and the branches and that it's the Father's will that you bear much fruit that the Father may be glorified...that the Father may be glorified. He's glorified in our fruitfulness.

What does it mean? What is fruitfulness? Well there are two kinds of fruit...attitude fruit, action fruit. I remember when I first started thinking about this many, many years...attitude fruit, what's that? Galatians 5:22 and 23...the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith meekness, self-control, that's all attitudes, spiritual attitudes. Action fruit, what's that? Philippians 1:11, the fruit of righteousness, the fruit of your lips, Hebrews 13:15, praise to God, the fruit of bringing someone to Christ. Paul says to the Romans, "I want to have some fruit among you." That's action fruit. Action fruit without attitude fruit is legalism. Action fruit as the result of attitude fruit is true spirituality.

God wants us to be fruitful by walking in the Spirit and living in the Spirit, we enjoy the fruit of the Spirit. And out of the fruit of the Spirit comes the behavior that is Spirit-driven, Spirit-empowered. The fruit of righteousness, the fruit of praise. Just thinking of Colossians 1:10, you'll remember this, "So that you walk in a manner worthy of the Lord to please Him in all aspects, or all respects, bearing

fruit in every good work.” That’s action fruit. God is glorified when you bear much fruit. You don’t want to be a little-fruit Christian. You can’t be a no-fruit Christian because if you’re a Christian at all, the life of God will manifest itself in you that’s why Jesus said, “By their fruit you shall know them.” But you don’t want to be just a few shriveled up grapes. You want to be an abundantly productive believer and God is glorified in your spiritual fruitfulness. It starts with attitudes and then action.

And then I wrote down praise. Psalm 50:23 says, “Whoever offers Me praise, glorifies Me.” Whoever offers Me praise, glorifies Me. You could almost make them one and the same. God is glorified when we praise Him. It reminds me of Luke 17 where the lepers that were cleansed went on their way and only one came back and gave glory to God by thanking Christ.

What does it mean to praise? Just three things, really. One, reciting God’s attributes. Two, reciting His works. Three, giving thanks for both. Reciting His attributes, His character, His nature, what is true about Him and reciting His works, what He has done and giving thanks for both. That’s praise. Whoever offers praise, Psalm 50:23, glorifies Me.

Then I wrote down, number seven, prayer. Do you remember John 14, Jesus said to the disciples in the Upper Room that whatever you ask in My name, I’ll do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Whatever you ask in My name, I’ll do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Why does God answer prayer? To put Himself on display, put His glory on display. When you pray it’s not as if you’re going to change God’s plans which have been established from before creation. When you pray, it’s not that you’re going to make some great massive paradigm shift take place in the Kingdom. The primary purpose of our praying is to let God put Himself on display in visible ways. Pray little and you will see little first hand of God’s great power and glory.

I keep thinking about Hudson Taylor, he said, “One day he looked at their resources and they needed 49 pounds and 11 pence to finish the money they needed for the missionaries.” And so he went to his knees and he prayed and the next day a man came up to him up out of nowhere, he had never met, and gave him a 50 pound note. That happened to him again and again and again and again. Would God have sustained his ministry in the purposes of God? Certainly, if God was going to accomplish His purpose. But what continued to strengthen that man’s resolve and make him the man that he was, was every time he prayed he saw the glory of God displayed. Pray so that God can put His glory on display. So that He could see His power and His grace.

And then I wrote down number eight, we glorify God by using our spiritual gifts...by using our spiritual gifts which are Holy Spirit-enabled abilities that come to us from the Lord because He wants to minister through us to the church. In 1 Peter 4 it says each has received a gift, some are speaking gifts and some are serving gifts. And they’re given so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 4:11. So when you use your spiritual gift, and this has been something that’s marked this church since the early years...I remember we used to talk a lot about spiritual gifts, I did a number of series on spiritual gifts...what prompted that a lot in the early years was the confusion and chaos of the Charismatic Movement which was misrepresenting the work of the Holy Spirit, and misrepresenting spiritual gifts and confounding and confusing and offering counterfeits to the true work of the Holy Spirit. And I felt I needed to help people understand the truth. And so we went in to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the gifting of the Holy Spirit and how that worked out in the church that has fleshed its way out in the 40 years since we did that in those very early days. And we understand that we use our gifts, my speaking gift, your speaking gift

is to minister to those to whom we speak. My serving gift, your serving gift is to minister to those to whom we serve.

And so, we have these gifts for the mutual edification of one another. And this is what builds up the body of Christ. You use your gift and God is glorified.

Well then in kind of rapid fire I wrote down five final things. You glorify God by bringing others to Him. Second Corinthians 4:15, Paul says, "All things are for your sake." What does he mean by that? Everything I do is for your sake that the grace, saving grace, which is spreading to many may redound to the glory of God. Every time I bring the knowledge of the gospel to someone who believes, it adds one more voice to the hallelujah chorus. We glorify God in that.

We glorify God by proclaiming the Word. Second Thessalonians 3:1, "Pray that the Word may go forth and be glorified."

We glorify God by moral purity...moral purity, virtue, holiness. That's 1 Corinthians 6, isn't it? "You've been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body," 1 Corinthians 6:20.

We glorify God by unity. Romans 15:5, "May the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another, according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Accept one another as Christ accepted us to the glory of God. This has always marked this church...unity. God has blessed and protected this church all these 40 years. This has been a church of one heart and one mind without regard for ways, background, economics. This is to the glory of God.

And the last one I wrote on this little Holiday Inn stationery was we glorify God by contentment...by contentment. Hard sometimes to be content even though we live in a culture that should overflow with contentment since we are so indulged. But I think that's what Paul has in mind in Philippians 4 when he says, "I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. I know how to get along with humble means and I know how to live in prosperity. In any circumstance I have learned that the secret of being filled and going hungry, having an abundance and suffering need because my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." And then he says, "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever amen." I'm content with what He gives me and I give Him glory for it.

Well there are a few that I wrote down later on the back. But you get the picture, don't you?

Father, we thank You that You have in Your sweet grace and kindness long ago helped us to see that we are to live lives to Your glory. We thank You, our Father, that Your Word is so simple that a child could understand it and yet so profound that we have yet to come close to plumbing its glorious depths. Thank You for these people, precious people who have lived in the pursuit of Your glory. Thank You for the years of joy that they have brought to me, all the elders and leaders and faithful folks who have come through the years and gone and been a part of this great ministry here, have lived out these convictions. They have been for us all the fixed points. They have been the foundation stones for all of us. That's why we're here. That's why the folks are here today. There's no mystery about this church. But You bless the people who give You glory and You've done it and You will continue to do it. And for that, we praise You and we seek even greater blessing as we are

evermore faithful to this commitment. Enable us by Your Spirit to live to Your glory. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).