Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

From Glory to Glory, Part 1
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-75

I want you to turn in your Bible this morning to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. We have already completed a study of this chapter but I want to echo our study a little bit and add a footnote this morning and then again tonight. I'm going to give you one message today in two parts, this morning and tonight. I won't be able to get finished and so we'll continue it tonight. I don't want to go into the next chapter because I know that we'll have a long break before we can continue. I'd rather wait till I return from my trip. But I want to add a footnote to chapter 3 if I can that I think will be practical and helpful, instructive for us.

Look at that eighteenth verse that ends that great chapter on the superiority of the new covenant and let me remind you what it says by reading it. Second Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

Now we saw that the culminating reality of the new covenant is that it is a transforming covenant. That in the new covenant we look at the glory of the Lord revealed in the face of Jesus Christ unobstructed. We see Christ in all His wonder, in all His beauty and all His glory, as described down in chapter 4 verse 6, "Light shines out of darkness, the One who has shone in our hearts gives us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." So as we look at the face of Christ we see the glory of God revealed. Nothing obscures us. We don't have a veil over our face like Moses did. There's nothing oblique or obscure, there's nothing hidden or dark or shadowy. The new covenant, the gospel, the message of Jesus Christ is clear. The light has been turned on and we can look with an unobstructed view right at the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. And as we look at the glory of God and focus on the glory of God revealed in Christ, we are moved from one level of glory to the next by the Holy Spirit who is moving us into the image of the very glory we behold.

This is what progressive sanctification is all about. This is Christian growth. This is the process of becoming like Christ...moving from one level of glory to the next as we gaze at the glory of the Lord.

Many years ago when I first came to Grace Community Church, the Lord impressed upon my heart the importance of the theme of the "glory of God" in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testament. Early on in my ministry here I preached a sermon on the "Glory of God," and through the years we have moved in and out of that theme many, many times and I want to do that again this morning.

We as believers who have come to participate by faith and by grace in the new covenant have been put into a relationship with God by which we can see His glory radiated through Jesus Christ as we look at Him unobstructed on the pages of Scripture. And in so looking can literally be transformed into His image from one level of glory to the next. All of that simply to say, we are to live to the glory of God. We are to live to move from one level of glory to the next level to the next level to the next level ever more and more like Jesus Christ, increasingly devoted to the glory of God, increasingly manifesting the glory of God.

Now that poses, at least for me and I trust for you, a very practical question. If we say we are going to glorify God, we are going to aim at the glory of God, we are going to focus on the glory of God, we are going to gaze on the glory of God, we are going to glorify God with our lives...how do we do that? How do we really move from one level of glory to the next? What is specifically and practically involved in that?

Well, I want to give you some very clear things that the Bible teaches about glorifying the Lord...how to move from glory, to glory, to glory, to glory in your life. And this morning I'm just going to give you two of them with a few sub points and then a few more tonight.

But let's begin at a very obvious point. Nobody hit a target without aiming at it. You're not going to get there if you're not moving in that direction. So point number one is if you want to glorify God, you have to aim your life at that purpose. You have to aim your life at that purpose. In other words, the very goal of your life is the glory of God, that's the focal point, that's what you are about, that's what you direct your life toward.

Jesus certainly did that. According to John 8:50 He said, "I came not for My own glory but the Father's." He didn't live for His own glory. He didn't live to fulfill His own agenda, but rather that which honored and exalted and pleased and lifted up God, even if lifting up God meant humbling Himself, even if exalting God meant basing Himself, even if setting God in the place of worship meant putting Himself in the place of cursing. He was willing to do that because He was always focused on the glory of God. God being glorified was His purpose. And so it is in our lives that we must live to glorify God.

Stating that in very simple terms we read 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 31 and you perhaps know this verse, but let me put it to you and maybe give it some richer context. In 1 Corinthians 10:31 we read this, "Whether then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." That's a very simple verse, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. I commented on this verse in the early service and someone came to me and say afterwards, "You know, that was an interesting statement when you read that verse, the person next to me poked the person next to him and said, `You've been glorifying God too much in your eating.'" Well that is not the intention...that is not the intent nor is that any kind of a balanced interpretation of this verse. Let me

help you with it. This is not saying the more you eat the more you glorify God, we want to understand that clearly.

What it is saying is that whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. In other words, it's a life focus. It isn't so much talking about eating and drinking. It's talking about all of life going down even to that which is as mundane as eating and drinking. I mean, that's about the commonest thing we do. You would think that might get left out, I mean glorify God when you speak, glorify God when you act and behave, glorify God when you do ministry, glorify God when you worship, glorify God when you meet people's needs, glorify God in spiritual and religious ways and ways of behavior...but eating and drinking? That's pretty mundane stuff. And that's the whole point. At the very basest point of human existence, eating and drinking, when you're just meeting biological need, do it to the glory of God. That becomes the focal point of everything you do in your life. That's the focus. You ask yourself, as I have for many, many years, does it glory God? Will it glorify God? Will it bring honor to His name? Will it exalt Him? Whatever it is, no matter how apparently or superficially mundane, it has inherent in it a capacity for you to honor God...even the simplest behavior like eating and drinking.

Now, you have to aim your life at that. That has to be the all-consuming purpose of your life, the all-consuming direction of your life that you're never going to do anything willfully and knowingly that does not bring honor, that does not bring glory to God. You want to honor Him with every single thing you do. You want to exalt Him, praise Him, lift Him up, worship Him, glorify Him.

But let me take that a little deeper because that's pretty general. How does that sort of flesh out? Well let me give you some things you can look at. Okay? Do a little inventory in your life and you can ask yourself a few questions that will help you know whether you're aimed at that purpose. If you want to find out where you're aimed, these questions will answer that for you.

Number one, do I prefer the glory of God above everything else? Do I prefer the glory of God above everything else? That's a very simple question and yet it has profound implications. Is the very purpose of my life to bring glory to God so much that His glory transcends any of my own personal desires? Relationships? Goals? Dreams? Ambitions?

It can be very costly to aim your whole life at glorifying God. Let me give you some illustrations. Go back to Exodus chapter 32, this is a pricey commitment. And if you go back to Exodus 32 you get a little bit of an idea of just how pricey it is. When you make the commitment to glorify God as a way of life, there may be some serious ramifications.

Moses in Exodus 32 had come down to find the people of Israel worshiping a golden calf. He had been up getting the law of God. He came down and found that they were worshiping a golden calf. Not only were they worshiping a golden calf but they were engaged in horrific iniquities...sins, gross

sins. And he had to confront this. I guess the saddest point of all was that his own brother, Aaron, who was supposed to be in charge of spiritual leadership was leading the people in this lascivious, lewd, immoral idolatry. In fact, what was going on was a violation of the first half of the Decalogue that was being given on the mountain. It was very defiant, happening at the very time God was giving His law, His law was being violated.

Verse 25 of Exodus 32 brings us into a most fascinating incident. When Moses saw that the people were out of control, or literally cut loose, for Aaron had cut them loose, or let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies. You see, it was a terrible dishonor to the God they claimed was their God for them to behave in such a terrible way. What glory did it bring to God for them to be acting like that? None. It detracted from His glory for here they were worshiping Him in an illegitimate way as if He could take the form of a golden calf and conducting themselves in immoral way which was blasphemy against His holiness. And so they were causing themselves and God to be derided or mocked among their enemies. And Aaron had led them into this out-of-control behavior.

So Moses stood in the gate of the camp, verse 26, and he said, "Whoever is for the Lord, come to me." Now the issue here is the honor of God. The issue here is the glory of God. The issue here is to exalt the character of God as over against this debauchery. So who is on the Lord's side, would be another way to say this. Who wants to glorify God? And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him, the priestly tribe came. Those who were responsible for the spiritual side of things, the worship, they came over and said...We're with you. We're willing to glorify God. We're going to take our stand...an unpopular stand cause all the rest of the people were happy to be doing what they were doing. Believe me, sin has its pleasure. But the people from Levi came and said, "We'll stand with the Lord."

Then verse 27, a most incredible thing is asked of them. "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, says Moses to them, Everyone of you put his sword upon his thigh, go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp and kill every man his brother, every man his friend, and every man his neighbor." You say you want to glorify God? Good, put your sword on and go kill everybody. Go kill your brother. Go kill your friend. Go kill your neighbor. He's not asking him to go kill some enemy. He's not asking him to go kill strangers. He's saying go ram a sword through the heart of your friend, go slit the jugular of your friend or your neighbor, or your brother.

Are you really devoted to the glory of God so much so that you will take this kind of action against those who are closely related to you? God's glory is at stake here. His name is being dishonored. This is a very pivotal moment in redemptive history. A lot is at stake. You've been led out of captivity, you're now in the wilderness. God is giving you His law, He is reconstituting you as His people. He is for the first time ever in history giving you the Decalogue, giving you the Mosaic Law. You're coming in to a new relationship with God based upon that. This is a new day and God wants to make something very clear--disobedience is intolerable. This is a pivotal moment and God wants to lay down the message that He doesn't tolerate disobedience, just like He laid it down with Ananias and

Sapphira in the early days of the church. And so God wants these people killed, a representative number of them slaughtered. God is gracious and He doesn't always do this, and even in this case He didn't kill everybody. In the midst of His wrath there is always mercy. But He wanted a very clear lesson given to people that there is a blessing and a cursing tied with this law and if you disobey it, there's going to be a high price, if you obey it you'll be blessed.

So, this is really putting it on the line, folks. You want to glorify God, do you? Put on your sword and go kill your family, friends and acquaintances. And verse 28 amazingly shows you the level of devotion of these Levites, "The sons of Levi did as Moses instructed and about three thousand men of the people fell that day."

Now you know those guys didn't just roll over and let their head get chopped off. You know they didn't just lie there while somebody ran a sword through them. You can't even imagine the chaos and the debacle, you can't imagine what was going on in the camp as these people were trying to escape from the murderous Levites who were trying to carry out the will of God by slaughtering them. By the time 3,000 were dead, killed in hand-to-hand combat, God said that's enough, I've made My point. Sin is a very serious thing.

Then verse 29 Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves today to the Lord for every man has been against his son and against his brother in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today." Dedicate yourself to the Lord now so that He can bless you. With obedience comes...what?...blessing.

This is a graphic early on demonstration of blessing and cursing coming with obedience or disobedience. "And it came about the next day that Moses said to the people, `You yourselves have committed a great sin.'" These people had worshiped an idol and the price for that is high. For some of them, death.

But the issue here that I want you to focus on is the people who were willing to glorify God even if it meant a severing in their family, a severing in their friendships, a severing among their neighbors. That's...that's how it is. Oh, I don't think God is asking us to do this, but I do believe that if you say I am going to live my life to the glory of God there may be a price to pay in your family, there may be a price to pay among your friends and there may be a price to pay among your neighbors. You may generate a great hostility. And I'm not just talking about non-Christians here, let me tell you something, there's enough carnality and enough compromise in the Christian church that if people decide they're going to live solely and only to the glory of God, they might find themselves loosing Christian friends who are willing to live at a compromising level. They might find themselves being severed from acquaintances that have been long-time acquaintances who aren't willing to live at that level of spiritual devotion. They might even find that they become the oddity in their own Christian family because they are so totally devoted to the glory of God. I mean, if you in your family of sort of lethargic compromising or apathetic Christians and you decide to live to the highest level of spiritual

devotion, you're going to become a rebuke to that whole environment...even though it's nominally Christian or even though it's really Christian.

But if you aim your life at the glory of God and you're going to live that way, then you will prefer Him above everything and everyone no matter what. Even if it costs you a family. Jesus said it, didn't He, "I came to bring a sword to divide families." Even if it costs you a friendship, even if it costs you alienation from your neighbors, it can do that, it will do that. It's sort of like taking a Nazarite vow, you just stick out, you're just kind of odd.

Look at John 21, let's see how it might even go further than that. In John 21 Jesus meets the disciples in Galilee in a post-resurrection appearance. He has told them to stay in the mountain and wait for Him, but they didn't. Peter disobeyed and went fishing and took everybody with Him. So the Lord comes and confronts Peter's disobedience and asks him three times if he loves Him. It's a fair question because Jesus had taught Peter, "If you love Me you'll keep My commandments," and here Peter had disobeyed and therefore his love could rightly be questioned. And Peter replied three times, "You know I love you." And then at the end of this little dialogue about love we come to verse 18 and Jesus responding to the affirmation of Peter's love says, "Truly, truly I say to you, when you were younger you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished." In other words, you controlled your own life, you called your own shots, you did what you wanted to do. Put on your own clothes, pulled on your own sash and determined the day's agenda. I mean, you were in charge. "But when you grow old you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you and bring you where you do not wish to go." You've been in control of your life and you've called the shots and you've had a great amount of independence. The day is coming in your old age, Peter, when somebody is going to tie you up and haul you off where you don't want to go.

What's He talking about? Verse 19, "He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God." He's saying to him, "Peter, you're going to glorify Me in death. You're going to die because you're so focused on glorifying Me, you're going to honor Me to the point of death." Now that must have been good news to Peter because every other time he faced death he chickened out. Every other time life was at stake, he vacillated, right?, when confronted even by a little girl and asked if he knew the person from Galilee named Jesus, he denied it. Peter had been a classic coward. And I think the Lord told him that the day would come when he'd be a hero just to sustain him through life with the confidence that in the end he wouldn't fail.

The day would come when somebody would say to Peter, "Look, Peter, either you deny Jesus Christ or we're going to kill you." And Peter would say, "Kill me, I will glorify Him at any cost." That's new for Peter. He hasn't been like that in the past. It must have been wonderful to know he'd be like that in the future. Tradition tells us they crucified him and that he didn't want to be crucified like Jesus, he didn't think he was worthy so he asked to be crucified upside down which they did. But that's how he glorified God. It cost him his life.

It could cost you your life. It could cost you your neighbors. It could cost you your friends. It could cost you your family. I mean, just to aim your life at that purpose is definitely going to isolate you from the crowd. But if you are a person who is completely committed to the glory of God, there's a price to pay. It was Peter who by the wonderful grace and power of God was willing to pay that price who wrote this in 1 Peter 4, "If anyone suffers as a Christian...verse 16...let him not feel ashamed but in that name let him glorify God." If you have to suffer to glorify God, suffer. The Spirit of grace and glory rests on you...what a great promise.

So what does it mean to aim your life at that purpose? It means to be consumed with the glory of God so that you prefer it above all else. It really doesn't matter what the consequences are at all. You know, it's a lot like those people in Hebrews 11 who...verse 37 and following says...were...well, verse 36, experience mocking, scourgings, chains, imprisonment, were stoned, sawn in half, tempted, put to death with the sword, went about in sheepskins, goatskins, destitute, afflicted, ill treated, wandering in deserts, and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. Why did they do it? Cause they cared more about the glory of God than anything else. What makes the Apostle Paul...here people say to him, "You go to Jerusalem and you know what's going to happen you, you're going to be put in prison. You could die." And he says, "None of these things move me because I don't count my life dear to myself, I just want to finish the ministry Christ has given me." That's the compelling issue.

When you live your life to the glory of God you really are willing to sacrifice family, friends, neighbors, your own life...your own life. Well you're not liable to die, you're not liable to get martyred in this culture, but you are liable to have to give up your ambitions. You may be asked by God to give up your goals, your dreams, your plans, your possessions. Therein lies a grave measure of self-sacrifice.

There's a second component to this first point. Aiming your life at this purpose means that you prefer the glory of God above everything else, but let me give you a second thing that it means. It means you suffer when He suffers. It means you feel pain when He is dishonored. Ask yourself the question...do I feel pain when God is dishonored? If the answer is yes, then you're living to His glory.

You say, "What do you mean by that?" I'm talking about empathy. I'll tell you one thing for sure, whoever you love the most has the tightest grip on your heart and if they feel pain, you'll feel it, right? You look at that precious little child that God has given you and anything coming into that life that brings pain to that little life wrenches your heart. Look at that life partner God has given to you, whatever comes in to his or her life to tear up that life that you love so much, tears your own heart out. Do you feel the same about God? Do you understand empathy toward God, sympathy toward God? Do you have a heart of compassion in terms of feeling the pain that God feels when His name is reproached or dishonored?

Psalm 69:9 is a great illustration of this. You don't need to look at it, I'll just quote it for you. Psalm 69:9, David says, "Zeal for Your house has consumed me," or "zeal for Your house has eaten me up." What does he mean by that? Well, what he means is that I am so passionately consumed with the honor and the glory of God that it consumes me.

Zeal is a marvelous word. Zeal is a tremendously rich concept. Zeal is a mixture, it is a mixture of passionate affection and righteous indignation. Zeal means that there is something I love so much I hate anything that taints it, stains it, injures it, detracts from it, threatens it. It's that mingling of holy affection and righteous wrath. That's what David felt. David said, "I look at the temple, I look at Your house and it...I just have such passion, such holy affection for what it stands for and such righteous indignation for anything that threatens its purity." In fact, it goes so far, said David in the same verse, "That the reproaches that fall on You are fallen on me."

What do you mean by that? I mean that when You're dishonored, I feel the pain. That when Your name is shamed, I feel the agony, that I hurt when You hurt. Boy, we live in a culture where God's name is dishonored all the time, where God is mocked and scorned and laughed at and things are advocated and espoused and pumped out in every imaginable form of entertainment that are a stench to the nostrils of God and a blasphemy to His name and a shame. And we can just kind of take them or leave them. When someone takes God's name in vain which is an act of blasphemy, does your blood curdle, do you feel empathy, do you feel the shame, the pain, the reproach falling on you that falls on Him? When our society strikes its blows against God in the myriad of ways that it does, do you feel the pain? Do you feel the shame? Or are you so insulated that you don't feel anything?

If you were really consumed with the glory of God you're going to feel the pain that God feels when His name is dishonored. And certainly from a personal standpoint if that's your feeling, you're not going to want to dishonor Him because you're not going to want to add to His pain. I look at my wife, i look at my children, I look at the people around me that I love, I can't imagine I would ever do anything to inflict unnecessary pain on them, that I would ever do anything to shame them or to bring reproach on them or to injure or to wound them. Why? Because I love them so much, they're so close, so much a part of my life. And yet, I am the temple of the living God who dwells in me by His Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. And how much of My life is spent either wittingly or unwittingly bringing shame upon one whom I affirm to love and who is so intimately related to me?

If I aim my life at the glory of God, then I'm going to feel the pain that He feels when He's dishonored. And if I feel it deeply enough I'm not going to want to dishonor Him. This was very much the attitude of Jesus in John 2. When Jesus began His ministry He went to the temple. He came as the prophet said He would come to His temple. And in John chapter 2 He went into the temple and He found things He didn't like. And He found money changers and He found ox and sheep and doves and they were all being sold there to be used as sacrifices at exorbitant rates. They were cheating people on

the exchange of currency that had to take place because people came from all over the ancient world. It was a wretched marketplace run by a bunch of hypocrites and sinners. And so He made a whip out of cords which wove together and He drove them all out of the temple. Now that will tell you something about the formidable character of His humanity. He was some kind of man. He went into the temple, a massive place filled with thousands upon thousands of people and single handedly tore the place up and sent everybody out. Incredible.

He drove them all out of the temple, all the sheep, all the oxen. Poured out the coins of the moneychangers, overturned their tables. To those who were selling the doves, He said, "Take these things away and stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise." And His disciples immediately remembered, verse 17, that it was written in Psalm 69, "Zeal for Your house has eaten me up." Jesus literally put into practice what David felt in Psalm 69. It had that Messianic implication. It was the passion for the purity of the worship of God that caused Jesus to do what He did. That's righteous indignation, that's a holy wrath. He felt the pain when God was dishonored. That's the mark of one who lives to the glory of God.

There's a third little sub point that I want to mention to you. If you really live to the glory of God, if you really aim your life at that, not only will you prefer Him and His Kingdom above everything else and suffer when He suffers, but thirdly, listen to this one, you will be content to be outdone by others as long as He is glorified. You will be content to be outdone by others as long as He is glorified.

In other words, your pride will be gone. There's a lot of pride, even among Christians. It can show up in the church, the wranglings and hassles in the church and people who want credit for this and want credit for that. Years ago somebody told me that it was their view based on their church experience that when Satan fell he landed in the choir loft because he saw so many jealousies and so many fightings and petty deals about who gets the solos and so forth and so on. And we thank God that we don't have that kind of situation at Grace Church, but that's true in a lot of places. In fact, even Dr. Criswell said years ago that he was having so much trouble with the choir, everybody arguing about who got to sing what that he just decided to have a testimony Sunday and he said it was one Sunday night once a year, anybody could come parade by the platform and sing one verse of anything they wanted and he said that way we got rid of all them on one Sunday night. I mean, we all know about competition. I remember two pastors were competing in a Sunday school contest to see who could get the most people. And the one that lost got sick. I'll never forget reading that. He was so emotionally tied up with winning. Ego can be a big factor. We want credit for this, or credit for that. We want to be the most noble or the most respected preacher or teacher. But if you're aiming only at the glory of God, then it doesn't matter what happens to you. You can humble yourself like Jesus did and take on the form of a servant. You can mocked and spit on and imprisoned like Paul was and it really doesn't matter because all you care about is that God be exalted, the Lord be glorified.

I think the best and simplest illustration of this is found in Philippians chapter 1. I would draw you to that. Philippians chapter 1, it's such a wonderful passage. In this passage, of course, as Paul writes to the Philippians he's in his first imprisonment, not the one in which he died, that's a later imprisonment, this was an earlier one. And, of course, once he was put into prison his envious, jealous detractors, the next breed of preachers coming along who had an exalted view of themselves wanted to use that as a way to put themselves up. And so they were going around saying, "Well he's in prison because there's secret sin in his life, you don't about it but God knows about it and He had to put him on a shelf." Or, "He's in prison because he somehow convoluted the doctrines, he's messed up the truth and God had to take him and put him on the shelf." And they were discrediting Paul and speaking evil against his character.

He comments on that in chapter 1 verse 15. He says, "Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife and some from good will." I mean, Paul was either the spiritual father, grandfather or uncle of every convert in the Gentile world. I mean, he was the one God used, he was the most beloved. His shadow was far and wide. It was cast over everything in the church at that time. And there were some guys coming along who were very jealous. They just couldn't deal with that. Their egos were big and they wanted their moment in the sun and at the expense of Paul they would take it. And now that he was in prison they would use that as a way to say God had put him on the shelf and it was their day and people should listen to them, not him. And they were preaching from envy and strife, and others from good will. Others had a right perspective on Paul, they knew him for the man that he was and their attitudes were right.

Verse 16 he says, "The latter...those good-will preachers...do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel." They know the reason I'm in jail is not either do to sin or a failure to teach the truth but because God put me here for the gospel's sake. "The former...however, verse 17, envy and strife category...proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives and they're trying to cause me distress in my imprisonment," or add pain to my chains, another way to translate that.

So, he says some preach Christ with good will toward me, some are lambasting me, lying about me. Look at verse 18, here's the real key, "So what?" That's what "what then?" means. So what? "Only that in every way whether in pretense or in truth Christ is proclaimed or preached, and in this I rejoice, yes and I will rejoice." I don't care what they say about me as long as Christ is preached. This is a man consumed with the glory of God. This is a man consumed with Christ. It doesn't matter to me. It doesn't matter to me whether they accuse me. It doesn't matter whether my reputation survives. It doesn't matter what people think of me. What matters is that Christ is preached? Let my candle go out if the Son of righteousness can but rise with healing in His beams. I'm not the issue.

Now there is a life aimed at the glory of God. Preferring the glory of God above everything else, feeling the pain when God is dishonored and being content to be outdone by others who do what you

do...if God is glorified. Now you're not going to be thrown in prison, perhaps, but are you...can you rejoice with your whole heart when somebody else does what you do better than you do it? You can if you're consumed with the glory of God. You paint and you want it to be the honor of Christ. Somebody else paints better to the honor of Christ, can you rejoice in that? You sing, somebody sings better. You teach, somebody teachers better. You preach, somebody preaches better. You write, somebody writes better. You've had an impact on people's lives, somebody has had a better impact, or a greater or more far-reaching. Is that all right? It is if you're consumed with the glory of God.

So the first thing then in glorifying God, moving from one level of glory to the next, is to aim your life at that purpose. Now let me give you the second and just briefly. We...we glorify God by confessing sin. We glorify God by confessing sin. The thief on the cross is a good illustration of this. He really did glorify God in his death because he had failed to glorify God all his life. But in his death he glorified God because he said this, Luke 23:41, looking at the other thief, "We indeed suffer justly."

What was he saying? We're getting exactly what we deserve. What is that? That is tantamount to a confession of sin. We're here and being crucified and it's exactly what we deserve. And you see, what that does is glorify God. How? Because it frees God from any accusation of impunity for being unkind or ungracious or unjust. They're not shaking their hands...their fists in the face of God like those in Revelation 16 and saying, "What kind of God are You? Why would You let this happen to us?" No, the thief said, "Hey, we're getting exactly what we deserve. We sinned. This is what we deserve thus freeing God to do whatever God would justly do without any accusation against him." You see, one of the reasons you confess sin is just to restore the fellowship with God but a second reason you confess sin is to free God up to do whatever He wants to do to you. If you confess your sin to God and God chastens you, then you've acknowledged that He has every right to do it, right? It's a holy reaction against your sin. On the other hand, if you confess your sin and God doesn't chasten you, then you have glorified God also because now you're going to understand the greatness and the magnanimity of His grace. Right? But if you don't even acknowledge your sin and don't even confess your sin and if God chastens you, you're liable to shake your fist at Him and say, "Why is this happening in my life? I don't understand this." Or if God is gracious to you, you're not even going to understand it at all. You're going to not even acknowledge it at all. You're going to think you deserve it because you're such a good person. But when you come to grips with your sin you free God up to chasten you and you'll know that He has a right to do it or to gracious to you and you'll know that you don't deserve it. Either case you're going to glorify Him for His justice or His mercy. But, you see, if you won't accept the responsibility for your sin, then He gets no glory either way.

Now we live in a culture where people don't want to take responsibility for their sin. Is that not true? They're not responsible for their sin. They're not responsible for anything in their lives. And consequently they do not glorify God. It doesn't not glorify God when you blame somebody else for sin that is only your problem. Nobody is responsible for your sin but you...not your mother, not your

father, not your aunt, your uncle, not your orphanage, not anything. Nobody but you is responsible for your sin. And the sooner you acknowledge that responsibility then the Lord in chastening you can be glorified because it's a just chastening. And in not chastening you, you can praise Him and thank Him for the grace that He gives you because you know what you really deserve.

But men are good at denying sin, right? Adam started it. The first sinner launched the first dispossession of responsibility and he says in Genesis 3:12 to God, "The woman You gave me." It's not my fault. I went to bed single. I'll tell you something else, I didn't ask for a wife, I didn't even know what a wife was. There wasn't such a thing. So this is not an answer to prayer. Furthermore, You could have picked anyone You wanted, why did You pick her? You didn't give me a choice. It wasn't like it was a beauty contest and I could pick whatever one I wanted. You're certainly not blaming me for this sin, are You? The woman You gave me.

Who did he blame? God. He could have said, "What do I know about a woman? Certainly can't hold me responsible." God said, "I do hold you responsible. I hold everybody responsible for his or her own sin."

Let me give you an illustration of this. Go to Joshua chapter 7 and we'll kind of wrap our thoughts up around that. Joshua chapter 7, a most fascinating account, you remember when the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt through the power of God and the ten plagues and crossed the Red Sea and it drowned Pharaoh's army, they then were in the wilderness, of course, and they wandered there for 40 years. And eventually got into the promised land. And the first point of entry in the promised land was Jericho. They came into Jericho and they won a great battle. You remember, they marched around the walls for seven days and seven times the seventh day and the walls fell down and they took the city. God had said to them, "Now when you take the city of Jericho don't take any spoil." Remember that? Don't take anything. But there was one guy who just couldn't resist. In fact, I've always said he was just "achin" to take something. That's how I remember his name easily. And he did. And he wasn't alone. There was complicity on the part of his whole family. I mean, after all, he buried the whole pile of treasure in the middle of his tent and you couldn't be digging a hole in the tent your whole family was living in without somebody knowing what was going on. So they were all a part of it. There was complicity in the whole family.

Instead of obeying God, he went in there and just stole everything. And here again is a very crucial point in God's redemptive history. After the Egyptian experience of several hundred years, they now wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Finally a whole generation died off. Now they go into the promised land, it's a brand new day, it's a dawning of a new era again and God wants to get across another message. The message is this...obedience brings blessing, disobedience brings cursing. And at very key points in redemptive history, God punctuated that reality. And here is one of them. He told them, "Don't take anything...don't take anything." And Achan and his family did. And it has to be confronted.

So we come to chapter 7 verse 19. Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I'm implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel." Now how is he going to do that? How is he going to give glory to the God of Israel? I'll tell you how. "Give praise to Him and tell me now what you have done and do not hide it from me." What's he saying? Confess your sin. In fact, some of the translations even say that. Confess your sin, don't hide it. So he said, "Look, confess your sin and give glory to God." Now how does that give glory to God? Well, if you'll accept responsibility for your sin then nobody is going to accuse God of being unholy when he judges you. That was the point. So he says confess your sin.

Verse 20, "Achan answered Joshua and said, `Truly I have sinned against the Lord the God of Israel, and this is what I did. When I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight," that's a fortune, "then I coveted them, took them, behold they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath." That's what he did. I like the specificity of his confession, don't you? He didn't say, "I demonstrated a moral weakness." He didn't say, "I had a moral failure." He said, "I sinned and this is exactly what I did," and even told him what order the stuff was stacked in.

"So Joshua sent messengers and they ran to the tent and behold it was concealed in his tent with the silver underneath it." He was accurate, just the way he said. "And they took them from inside the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the sons of Israel and they poured them out before the Lord." Must have had them in some containers and just dumped it out. "Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan, the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantle, bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him and brought him down to the Valley of Achor, or the Valley of Trouble. And 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 fire after they had stoned them with stones." Whoa, this is a big fire. There's a lot of things burning here, folks, lots of people, lots of animals, lots of stuff. "And they raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day and the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day."

Now if I had been in that little deal that day, I would have walked away saying, "You know, obedience is better." It's a better choice. Obedience is wiser. And that was the whole message. Every time a person disobeys God doesn't kill them, but periodically to make His point, He's done that at crucial junctures in Israel's redemptive history and even in the beginning of the church, as I mentioned, with Ananias and Sapphira, to remind us that it's all about blessing and cursing, those who obey are blessed, those who disobey are cursed. And, you see, if Achan hadn't confessed that sin and God had just wiped out that whole family, somebody might say, "Well what kind of a God are You? Well why would You do that?" And then the pagan neighbors might say, "Boy, you've got a terrifying, fearful God. He just wipes out people and families and animals." But when he confessed that he had sinned against God, then what everybody would have to say was, "This is a God who is so holy He

will not tolerate sin," and that is the reputation that glorifies God. Right?

And that, of course, sets up the whole significance of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. You can see that what Jesus Christ did on the cross was appease the wrath of God by satisfying His justice for us.

You want to glorify God? Then aim your life at that purpose and confess your sin and confess it specifically so that when God chastens you He will not be impugned for being unjust. And when He shows you grace, He will not be forgotten for His mercy.

Nehemiah vindicated God's righteousness in Nehemiah 9:33 and said, "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us." Genesis 41:9, "Then spoke the chief butler to Pharaoh, `I do remember my sins this day.'" Genesis 44:16, "So Judas said, `What can we say my Lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out our sins.'" First Samuel 15:24, Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, I have truly transgressed the command of the Lord." Daniel said, "I was speaking and praying and confessing my sin." Simon Peter saw Jesus, fell down at Jesus' feet, Luke 5:8, and said, "Depart from me, I am a sinful man, O Lord." The Publican beating on his breast said, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," Luke 18:13. Paul said, 1 Timothy 1, "I am the chief of sinners."

You see, when we admit our sin that glorifies God because it puts on display His holy wrath against sin and it puts on display His sweet merciful grace for the sinner. You want to move from level of glory to level of glory and become more and more like Christ? You want to become all that God wants you to be? Then aim your life at glorifying God and confess your sin. Now that's two, I'll give you some more tonight. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, again this is so practical and so basic and helpful for our lives. We pray that You'll apply it to us. Lord, we pray that You will grant us grace to be the kind of people You want us to be, to live to Your glory, to ask that ubiquitous question, that constant ever-present query...will this bring you glory? May it be the controlling question in our hearts. We know, Lord, one other thing, too, that no one gives You glory who doesn't confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God. Confessing You as Lord to the glory of God is where it all starts. If we don't confess Jesus as Lord, then there can be nothing else we can do to glorify You. You've said, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him," if we don't do that we dishonor You from the start. I pray, Lord, for those here who have not glorified You by confessing Jesus as Lord, who have not accepted Your testimony concerning Christ, who have not accepted His sacrifice on their behalf, who have rejected Your Son and thus spurned Your grace and spurned Your love and mercy. I pray that this may be the day that they would confess Jesus as Lord and thus bring You honor and bring You glory for the gift of Christ on their behalf.

And then, Lord, for those who are Christians, may we aim our lives at this purpose, may we confess our sin honestly and openly to You that we might willingly accept Your just chastening and Your merciful goodness and forgiveness. We thank You that the glory shines to us through the face of

Christ and can shine in us and from us as we glorify You and move from one level of glory to the next. We commit this truth to You in our lives as well and may we be what You want us to be as we apply it. We ask that Your Spirit would do that on our behalf in Christ's name. Amen.

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