



Glory To Whom Glory is Due

Series: *Philippians – To Live Is Christ*

Philippians 4:20

November 22, 2015

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Two Ways of Living

At the risk of sounding overly simplistic or naïve, beloved, I want to make a statement that I am convinced, according to the testimony of Scripture, is absolutely true. In the final analysis, when all is said and done, when you boil everything down, when you silence all the noise, there are really only two ways of living. You and I will either live for the glory of God or we will live for our own glory. You will either live to display that you believe that the most important being in the universe is God or you will live to display that you believe that the most important person in the universe is you. The driving force, the animating principle of your life, will either be the glory and the pleasure and the praise of God or it will be your own personal glory, your pleasure, and your praise. You and I will either live in a way that says the center of everything is God or the center of everything is me. And it is my goal and my desire this morning that we would be moved today to grasp the incredible high calling and blessing that it is to bring glory to God with our lives and that we would make it the overarching goal of the whole of our lives.

Listen again to Paul's words in verse 20, which serves as the foundation for this sermon this morning. He says: ***"To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."*** (Philippians 4:20, ESV) Let those words sink into your minds and hearts -- ***"To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."*** (Philippians 4:20, ESV) These words from Paul serve as a climax, a capstone, and a pithy and concise summary of everything that has come before them in this letter. It sets the proper perspective for all of life. It is a doxology – an expression of praise and worship that is born from all of the rich theology that comes before it.

Paul has laid down some rich theology in this letter, hasn't he? He has spoken of the rich grace of God by which He has saved us and of the certainty that ***"he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."*** (Philippians 1:6, ESV) He has

written of the selfless way in which Christ has redeemed His people and the honor that God the Father has given to Him saying, that **“though (Christ) was in the form of God, (He) did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** (Philippians 2:6–11, ESV)

Paul has spoken in no uncertain terms that true righteousness and a right standing with God, approval and acceptance with God, comes only through faith in Christ. After listing all the things to which he once held as the hope of his acceptance with God, all his imagined virtues, he confesses: **“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—”** (Philippians 3:7–9, ESV)

He speaks of the glorious and certain reality that **“our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”** (Philippians 3:20–21, ESV)

Then in light of this rich theology, Paul says of himself: **“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”** (Philippians 1:21, ESV) But he doesn’t just leave it there – what all this means for Him, personally. Instead, throughout the letter makes commands, telling us how we should live. He says things like:

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one

mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.” (Philippians 1:27–28, ESV)

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.” (Philippians 2:12–16, ESV)

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus... Brothers, join in imitating me... Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.” (Philippians 3:14, 17,4:1, ESV)

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:4–9, ESV)

Here is the point, beloved. Paul is saying, in essence, “There is a right way to live in light of the truth that I have written to you, and by implication a wrong way to live. There is a way to live that demonstrates that you understand and truly feel the real and overarching purpose of all that God has done for us in Christ and a wrong way.”

The location of this doxology – **“To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Philippians 4:20, ESV)** – is important. There is a way that someone could read this rich

theology and the consequent commands of Paul in a purely self-centered, self-focused sort of way, from a purely utilitarian sort of view. In fact, it is done all the time. “Believe in Christ and it will make your life better... Do these things and life will go better for you... Emulate me because it is the best way to live... Here’s my testimonial to a better way, a more honorable way of living.” And that makes who the focus – me! To read this truth in that way is to remove it all from the proper reference point, which is God.

If all of this instruction is just an end in itself, helpful suggestions for a more meaningful life, are they really that worthy of much energy or commitment? Divorced from the goal of bringing God glory, who is to say that this is a particularly better way to live? But if we resolve to respond to this truth and to live in this manner, not simply because it is good, but because God commands it and gives us the grace to believe and to live it out, and the result is that He receives the glory that He deserves – well, then, that changes everything.

Paul wants us to see that the proper focus, the goal of the gospel theology he has been expounding, the exhortation and the commands that he has written is so that God, our Father, would receive the glory, the praise, the honor, the acclaim, the renown and the fame of which He alone is worthy. That is the summation of this letter – ***To our God and Father be glory forever and ever.***

John Piper wrote: **Nothing makes God more supreme and more central than when a people are utterly persuaded that nothing – not money or prestige or leisure or family or job or health or sports or toys or friends – is going to bring satisfaction to their aching hearts besides God. This conviction breeds a people who passionately long for God on Sunday morning. They are not confused about why they are here. They do not see songs and prayers and sermons as mere traditions or mere duties. They see them as means of getting to God or God getting to them for more of His fullness.**

The only proper perspective, the only worthy goal, from which to live, the highest ambition around which to establish your life, a life which God has redeemed through Christ from the pit of sin, is the praise and the glory of God. Everyone has an organizing principle of their lives, something they live for as their highest goal. Whatever you set as the motivating principle of your life will direct the whole of it. It will determine your whole character, motives, the use of your time and possessions, how you establish your home, spend your money, and how you raise your children. What is greatest ambition? You might be thinking,

“You know, I have never really thought about that.” I want to help you really think about it today.

Paul’s desire for the Philippians – and he addresses them as a church, as a people, not as a disconnected collection of various parts, but as a whole – was that they would engage life together as the blood-bought, God-fearing, Christ-exalting, Spirit-led people of God, and that they would live for God’s glory. And the underlying foundation for that desire was the fact that the church is people of God, with whom God makes His dwelling place.

The Glory of God Must Be the Goal of Our Living Because of Whose and Who We Are

Think about what we once were according to Ephesians 2: ***“Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”*** (Ephesians 2:12–13, ESV) This is what we once were – separated from Christ, far off from God; alienated from the people of God; strangers to the covenant; hopeless; godless.

That we are saved is a work of God’s sovereign hand. Motivated by His love, springing forth from His mercy, God has redeemed us and made us His people by grace through faith – faith that He, Himself, gave us to believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus for our salvation. That is an awesome display of God’s power, especially in light of the conditions that defined us prior to His making us a people.

And this is what Christ has done, according to Ephesians 2:14ff. – He has brought us near to God by His sacrifice, by the shedding of His blood; broken down the wall of hostility between us and God and between the distinctions of men; reconciled us to God and forged peace by Christ’s blood. Through Christ’s blood, He has forged peace with God, reconciling sinners with the holy and righteous God, by suffering in Himself the penalty of our sin and presenting us to God clothed in His perfect righteousness.

He has brought us near to God, by His blood into a union that cannot be broken. It is real and lasting and true. In fact, what Christ has done in his death is to make in the church a

brand new race. No longer is the issue Jew or Gentile, but lost or redeemed. Do you see -- the distinctions that separate men and women in Christ from one another are completely destroyed by the cross. We are a brand new race of the redeemed.

In fact, listen to the way that this is described: **“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”** (Ephesians 2:19–22, ESV)

When you become a Christian, you become part of the Kingdom of God, a part of the city of God. When the gospel comes in power, alienation from God and from the people of God comes to an end. We become citizens of the kingdom of God, fellow citizens with all of the other saints, those set apart by God and redeemed by the blood of Christ.

You're in God's household, not as a temporary visitor or a guest but as a member of the family. But Paul goes even further. We are citizens of a Kingdom, we are members in a family, but more than both of those, his words come to a climax by calling us the temple of God, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The church - God's spiritual community - is the new temple of the Spirit. The true Church is where the Lord is at home, a place where God, by the Spirit, where He dwells in the midst of His people. We are a people who are bound together by a common allegiance to one Lord and God and to Our Savior, Jesus Christ. We all acknowledge the same sovereign King, gracious Father, and merciful Savior. We are the new people of God in a fallen world, created and sustained by the power of God. And we are citizens in that great Kingdom, and that must take precedence over every other citizenship that we enjoy. My allegiance is to Him first. Our allegiance is to Him first. It has always got to be Him first. It has to be Him.

Like Peter rejoiced: **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”** (1 Peter 2:9, ESV) And that means:

We Must Walk Worthy of Our Calling

Hasn't that been what Paul has been telling us through this letter? **“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the**

faith of the gospel,” (Philippians 1:27, ESV) Paul gives more explanation to this when He says in Ephesians 5 and starting in verse 15: “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:15–21, ESV)

Walk as one who realizes the magnitude of the church’s calling and the wickedness of the age. Look carefully how you walk. Know where you are going. Don’t meander aimlessly through life but pursue the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Do not waste your life by pursuing what does not last, what is fleeting and temporal. Live so that God is praised.

We are not just strolling through life. Paul calls us to walk wisely, to walk carefully, pursuing what is most to be treasured, which is Christ. It is the picture of walking with diligence, with purpose, with wisdom, and with certainty, to the utmost of his strength and power in the grace of God; according to the rule of God’s word, in light of the cross, making Christ our pattern, depending on the leading of the Holy Spirit, in a manner that beautifies the gospel of Jesus Christ as pilgrims and strangers in this world.

The Puritan Richard Baxter wrote in the 1650’s: ***It is a most lamentable thing to see how most people spend their time and their energy for trifles, while God is cast aside. He who is all seems to them as nothing, and that which is nothing seems to them as good as all. It is lamentable indeed, knowing that God has set mankind in such a race where heaven or hell is their certain end, that they should sit down and loiter, or run after the childish toys of the world, forgetting the prize they should run for. Were it but possible for one of us to see this business as the all-seeing God does, and see what most men and women in the world are interested in and what they are doing every day, it would be the saddest sight imaginable.***

But not us. Instead we are to look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. The point is that our pursuit of Christ is about more than good for us, but is about bringing glory and fame and honor to the Lord in the way that we live. Our goal is to make God glorious in everything that we do.

In fact, Paul made clear in 1 Corinthians 10:31, the scope of this calling to bring glory to God when He wrote: **“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”** (1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV) That brings us to:

The Sum Total of It All

In his letter to the Romans, after Paul spends the first 11 chapters of the book describing the eternal redemptive plan of God, the gospel from just about every angle imaginable, he makes an absolute statement that reverberates throughout the whole of Creation. He says: **“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”** (Romans 11:36, ESV)

Here is what Paul is saying: We’re made for His glory, the universe was made for His glory and we’re obligated to give Him back the praise and glory which is due His name. From Him, through Him and to Him are all things. All comes from Him, all exists in Him, and everything ends in Him. He is the source of all, He sustains all, and everything leads back to Him and to His glory. There are only two ways of living – for my glory or for Christ’s. Which will it be?

John Piper asks this question: “Do you love the thought that you exist to make God look glorious? Do you love the thought that all creation exists to display the glory of God? Do you love the truth that all of history is designed by God to one day be a completed canvas that displays in the best way possible the greatness and beauty of God? Do you love the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to vindicate the righteousness of God and repair the injury that we had done to the reputation of the glory of God? Do you love the truth you personally exist to make God look like what he really is—glorious? I ask again: Do you love the fact that your salvation is meant to put the glory of God’s grace on display? Do you love seeing and showing the glory of God?” This is why God created the universe. This is why he ordained history. This is why he sent his Son. This is why you exist and have been rescued and made the people of God, by His grace. Forever to see and savor and show the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

We are going to talk about what that looks like in every arena of our lives, the application of the whole of this letter to every aspect of our lives -- in our personal lives, in our families, in what we do as a church, in the way that we do missions, in every area as the people of God, over the next few weeks. But let me just close by reminding you of this:

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, we have this brief lifetime, a vapor, James calls it. Life's only meaning under heaven, it's only lasting pursuit, and our only satisfaction can come from consciously living it to glorify God. That is the goal of our lives, as men and women made in the image of this eternal and ever-blessed God, to glorify him now and forever. *Will you embrace this calling as your treasure and your joy?*

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